

# CRUSOE'S ISLAND

*In the Caribbean*

BY  
JAMES H. BOWEN  
ILLUSTRATED BY  
J. H. BOWEN

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*Crusoe's Island*  
*in the Caribbean*

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VERMILION

*Books by* HEATH BOWMAN  
*with* STIRLING DICKINSON

ON  
WESTWARD FROM RIO  
MEXICAN ODYSSEY  
DEATH IS INCIDENTAL





"Rain Comin'."

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CRUSOE'S  
ISLAND

*In the Caribbean*

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*By*  
HEATH BOWMAN  
*and*  
JEFFERSON BOWMAN

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*To* GERVASE CASSON

*whose good judgment in  
choosing Tobago for a  
home has made our stay  
infinitely more pleasant*



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I

*Red and Green*

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## *Galvanize and Hibiscus*

FROM our hilltop house we look far out to a tropical sea. Seven hundred feet high, Terry Hill is reached from the shoreline by a road that winds up through two miles of cocoa plantations. Our windows frame what we believe is an almost unrivaled view: below the terraces of hibiscus hedges, splashed with their flame-red blossoms, the graceful plumes of bamboo hide the remainder of the gentle slope, so that beyond this frontier we immediately see the distant, low-lying point at Barbados Bay. Here the coconut palms dot the land like so many asterisks of vivid green, right to the creaming, white line of the surf. At the edge they are waving silhouettes against the immensity of the Atlantic.

High above the far horizon, where the water has deepened to the shade of cobalt, tower billowing clouds that constantly march along with the trade wind. Yet the vast blue elements of sea and sky that surround our island cannot dim or change its predominating color notes.

Our two gigantic samans, or umbrella trees, shade the long eaves of our red-painted "galvanize," the corrugated iron roof of the tropics. Now in late spring the wide-stretched limbs are covered with myriad small, pink bouquets. Toward the sea and beyond the last terrace, our

flamboyant has lost its leaves and is just beginning to clothe itself with scarlet blossoms. On the other side, by the steps up to our gallery and the entrance to the house, a crimson bougainvillea, large as a flowering tree itself, also repeats this accent. Then there is the poinsettia, a combination of the two colors at this moment. And rather to our dismay, it seems that our garden is running to shades of red; reseeding themselves, the zinnias have lost all but this color. Roses and lady slippers follow their lead, the coleus is a deep maroon, and it looks as if shortly we would have one more variation on the theme from our cosmos.

Not that this bright accent is overpowering; it is merely a touch amidst the verdant tangle of growth which completely surrounds our Terry Hill. On either side of us the jungle dips into a ravine only to ascend to other ridges. Behind us the hills climb gradually toward the Main Ridge; but the heights are concealed from our view.

Symbolically, too, the complementary colors have their counterpart in the bloody history of this emerald isle. If we could see beyond that distant horizon, could see three thousand miles, we would discern the African Guineas; straight from there came the black slaves who once made this island so well worth fighting for. Only eleven degrees north of the equator, our brothers in this latitude are Aden and Madras and Bangkok. But our small island lies at the southern end of the Caribbean West Indies.

We have been living here in this house for many months now. It has been an especial sort of privilege, and an experience full of surprises. Shortly we must say good-by. It seems only a moment ago that it was fall, and we

were leaving New York harbor. It is hard to realize summer will be in full swing when our little freighter once more deposits us in the States. . . .

You have always wanted to live awhile on a tropical island, or you would hardly have opened this book. You are reading it either because you have a very definite picture of these latitudes and like to have it confirmed, or because you are curious to learn just what life on such an island is like.

The human mind is full of misconceptions. At least, we have found ours to be. And sometime you must have been fooled, when your mental images exceeded or underrated the actuality of a scene. No one place is more subject to misconception than the lands under the Southern Cross. The very words "tropical islands" carry a host of romantic associations. The answer is simple: as children, we were all brought up on *Treasure Island* and *Robinson Crusoe*, and Melville's tales of the South Seas. Those are the old stand-bys, but today the number is legion.

From our own faulty visions, and those of our friends, we've made a list of these imaginary tropic islands. Usually they are coral strands with a few palm trees, a deep blue ocean creeping up to white sands. In direct contrast, they may be steamy jungles which are all but impenetrable, and festooned with deadly serpents. The stock characters are beachcombers and brown maidens, and perhaps the white man in a pith helmet, lording it over his sweating coolies.

If you left off daydreaming, and wanted as we did to particularize on the West Indies, in all probability

you would remember being slightly bored by some friend's amateur movies of these islands. And if you didn't think first of the civilized fringes, Nassau and Bermuda, you might recall a black Negress with her bright headkerchief. With much those same associations, we had always thought of the West Indies as sissy traveling—all right for a cruise, but hardly exotic, and certainly not up to snuff as real tropics. But they were close at hand, and we heard the living was fairly cheap. Although we had both seen the tropics in many places, and had crossed the line, neither of us had ever been in the Caribbean. Consequently, even less than a year ago our visions were both spotty and ignorant.

Jeff had been to Tahiti in the South Seas; she thought no place could be more near paradise; Heath maintained he had seen no spot equal to Rio. However, Jeff admitted that since then she had seen more of the world; probably this memory was tinged with the excitement of a first view of the tropics. She was nonetheless sure that the West Indies were hot and humid, rather flat on the whole, and dotted with a few coconut palms. Because travel literature pictures leave out much, and by the careful process of exclusion make all scenes wonderfully picturesque, we were both skeptical.

Then as the weather grew colder and city life every day less pleasant, we were caught up in the full web of the tropical island fable, and forgot what lands we did know. Reason went overboard. It was futile to speculate, we said in one breath, and in the next were painting our picture with the brightest hues. On an island only eleven degrees from the equator, we decided, in honest-to-goodness warmth, we would have fruits all year around, and could rent a house at the edge of a coral-reefed

lagoon, where we could step from our door onto the sandy beach. With that start we completely let go. We dragged out and dusted off all the cluster of childhood associations, and peopled the island with monkeys, parrots and the inevitable palm trees.

Poring over maps and writing letters, by elimination we finally selected this island of Tobago. Some of our friends evinced a certain curiosity at the name, which was as new to them as it still was to us. Then we were pronouncing it with the broad Spanish "a," which would have been correct a few centuries ago, before the British substituted their anglicized version, so that it now rhymes with "may go." Even Trinidad, where we were to disembark from our freighter, was very vaguely placed on our mental maps. To us it was merely a place "down there," famous for a big and ugly lake of pitch, with which Sir Walter Raleigh had caulked his galleons.

We were by no means discovering the island, although it is not very well known. No sooner had we become interested than we found three friends who had been there. Yet when we told most people it was in the West Indies, they lapsed into complete apathy. They felt it was like going to Florida or Bermuda. We were letting them down.

In a foolish moment, trying to justify ourselves, we told them the island was the actual locale of Robinson Crusoe's tale. They sat up; they raised their eyebrows. Immediately Tobago became a *tropical island*. Friends and relatives, who had been aroused to only a faint interest in other foreign places where we had lived, looked at us differently.

To live on Crusoe's island made our winter sojourn

too pat for words; it lent an extra, romantic overtone which did the trick. But this coincidence suddenly made our exodus doubly difficult. The fable was brought to mind, and we were looked upon either with envy or distrust.

Distrust, because they viewed us as escapists—and that is a harsh word these days.

Because we weren't tied to office desks, and our workshop was where we hung our hats, people called us lucky—sometimes with only half-concealed disapproval. We agreed that we were fortunate, with a small reservation: unlike them, we drew no weekly pay checks.

"Oh," they said, "so you're going to write a book about Tobago?"

No, Heath told them firmly, it was to be a novel.

"About the West Indies?" they persisted.

No, about America; and he explained how he had been collecting data he needed, making notes and outlines all summer. In a quiet island, he hoped he could gain a better perspective on his subject, and write more peacefully.

"But you'll come back with a book about the island," they prophesied knowingly.

Well, now that the novel is finished, we will, and they're right. But we're writing this because their conception was wrong and so was ours.

Long before the dawn when we came through the Bocas of Trinidad and saw that high peninsula of nearby Venezuela and the mountains back of Port-of-Spain, Jeff had changed her mind about the barrenness and general flatness of all the islands. Yet as a matter of fact our quick views of five or six of them merely served



to bolster the old fable in all its most pleasant, romantic and congenial aspects. We saw palm trees lining white sand beaches, against purple or bright green mountains; on the streets were donkey carts, and too-picturesque Negresses with their plaid madras kerchiefs. There was a great deal of tropical fruit. And the sun was good and hot—presently hot enough so that Heath finally abandoned an ancient resolution and bought a sun helmet. Everyone wore white ducks, black boys dived for pennies, their thin bodies wriggling through a green but transparent water. Under the dazzling sun we expanded, and idly gave full play to our imaginations, now fortified by those actual sights before our eyes.

By the time we arrived at Trinidad, we were so eager to see our island that we spent only one day in Port-of-Spain. Fortunately, the little coastal steamer was leaving that night; it plies back and forth between the big island and its "ward" Tobago only three times a week.

As we hung over the taffrail and watched the lights disappear and the great mounds of the Bocas, black against a star-filled sky, we knew that our adventure had begun. Not that the ten days aboard the *Ingrid* had not been exciting, made more so than you would possibly believe by that remarkable gentleman, Captain Hamre, who owns his own ship, and Uncle Frank the steward. But we had been waiting for Tobago, and now our island was too close to venture a guess about its appearance; the small flat map had given us no inkling, there was no description we could find. All we knew for certain was that we were in the tropics. The day had been humid and steamy. Friends had spoken of place-names until we knew everything but the essential fact—how the island actually *looked*.

The steamer cast anchor in the open bay off Scarborough just at dawn. Through our porthole, in that rose and yellow light, we saw only a barren hill with a few tumbledown wood shacks. The sea washed grayly upon rocks below, and the gulls swooped to pick at bits of orange peel, squeaking and flapping away with that characteristic side-slip motion.

When we hurried out on deck, the town lay before us. There was a kind of dilapidated jetty, and along the waterfront ran a series of shacks and stores, still boarded up. To our left stretched the lowlands, out to the arm which forms the harbor. Through a low mist straggled some palms. To the right, the street seemed to wind out of sight up a short hill, where we could see a few roof tops, all red-painted galvanize, against an unprepossessing green. The sun was not yet up.

It was our first shock, and our hearts sank, our visions went aglimmering. Perhaps the sight may correspond to some people's idea of the tropics, but to us it looked like the last outpost of the world. Its very appearance in that early morning light, with few people stirring, seemed to indicate that we would henceforth be totally isolated. Impossible that Trinidad was just a few hours away. This, we privately thought, afraid to tell each other our disappointment, was a desert island indeed.

The town of Scarborough itself, perched on the hill and for the most part clustered around a sterile little market place, was hardly cheering. Beside our memories of Latin plazas, this looked singularly colorless—the little one-story frame shops, the disproportionate columns of the post office, heavy-handedly British, the drab mother hubbards of the angular Negro

women, the lack of any flowering thing about this nucleus.

Now that we know the town better, and have seen it under the full, bright glare of noon, are familiar with the frangipani tree just at the outskirts, and the old bridge where ancient musket barrels make the railing, we know it for what it is: a characteristically West Indian tropical town where perhaps five hundred people, almost entirely black, buy and sell, and live in houses perched against the slope of the hill which winds on up to the fort. But we were agitated, even as we were taken out to the guesthouse on an estate near town, by the prospects of renting a place to live. We knew that two or three houses were available, and in the next few days covered the length of the island, twenty-seven miles, to see them. One was at the northern, or windward, end; the other, called the Tower, was in the opposite direction.

Then at last we were taken to inspect Terry Hill. We had not been enthusiastic about the description, remembering our hope for a thatched hut right on the beach. But it was not always healthy, they said, to live on the sands; and thatched huts were relegated to a few of the poorest blacks.

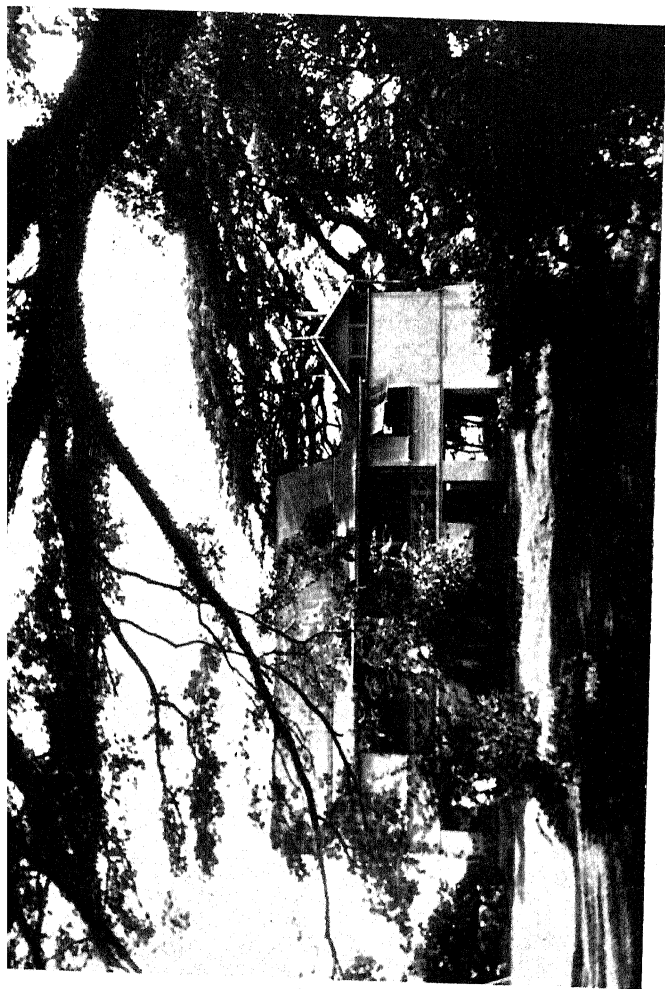
But the view from Terry Hill captured us. Without one murmur of regret we hastened to make arrangements for a cook, and began eagerly asking questions about housekeeping. It might be difficult in such an isolated spot, we acknowledged, but we wanted the peace and quiet—and that superb view. At the guesthouse we were given the bible of Tobago, Canning's catalog, and set to work typing a long list of provisions. Canning's in Port-of-Spain supplies everything from their own

bottled rum and foreign wines to the choicest imported cheeses, toothbrushes and scouring powder. The market at Scarborough would supply our meats and vegetables, and we arranged to have the van from Studley Park estate, below Terry Hill, bring out those things. All the procedure which sounded so complicated in letters seemed very simple as the old-timers gave us advice. Life would be just what we wanted; our visions were coming true, we said.

We were a highly satisfied and complacent pair when we finally left the hotel that day, jammed in the front of Henry's taxi, the back of his touring car overflowing with our luggage, our first market order and our big crates from Canning's.

Today we are great friends with Henry, and would not think of calling another chauffeur to drive us anywhere on the island. Then he seemed only a solemn black boy, who replied when Jeff told him he was a good driver, "Very good driver. Been driving long time." We caught his words, but the singsong of the Tobagonian was in those days almost a foreign language to us.

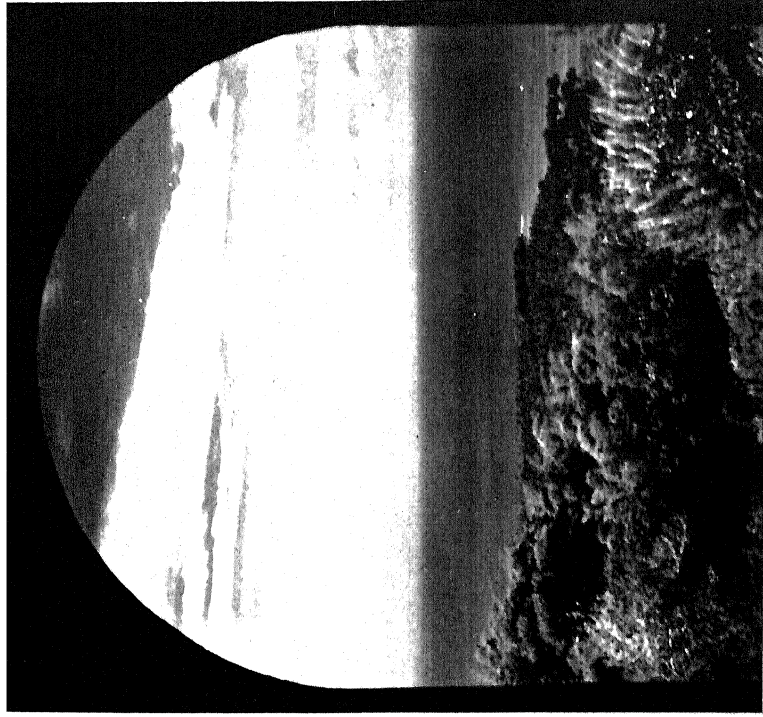
Seven miles does not sound like a long distance, but it seemed much farther by the time we had wound through numerous villages and coconut groves, skirted the sea at the frequent bays, and eventually turned off the main road and climbed in constant curves to the village of Mount St. George, just two miles below Terry Hill. Our only concern then was to settle in our fine house; and we gave not a thought to the fact that with taxi fares what they were we could very, very seldom afford to drive into Scarborough.



The saman trees shade Terry Hill.



Our living room.



As far as Africa——

"But this is what we want," we would have said that day.

It was somehow different, arriving the second time. The house was ours, rented for as long as we wished; and we knew what to look for—the first signs of habitation on the private road, where the bush gave way to tall hibiscus and slender bamboo palms, the bank of thick ferns, and finally the gallery with its bougainvillea.

Even before Henry had tooted his horn, our servants had heard the unfamiliar sound of a car approaching, slowly grinding up in second gear. They came running from the kitchen and down the gallery steps to greet us. Martin Hannibal, a great dark buck, went with the house, and was to be our butler and yard-boy. Leotha Caterson we had hired from the village below. And in the distance stood the old retainer, one-armed Providence, who had outstayed the original owners. We felt like masters indeed at that moment, for, with grins and many mumbled words which we did not comprehend at all, they began unloading Henry's car. We ran ahead to see our mansion again.

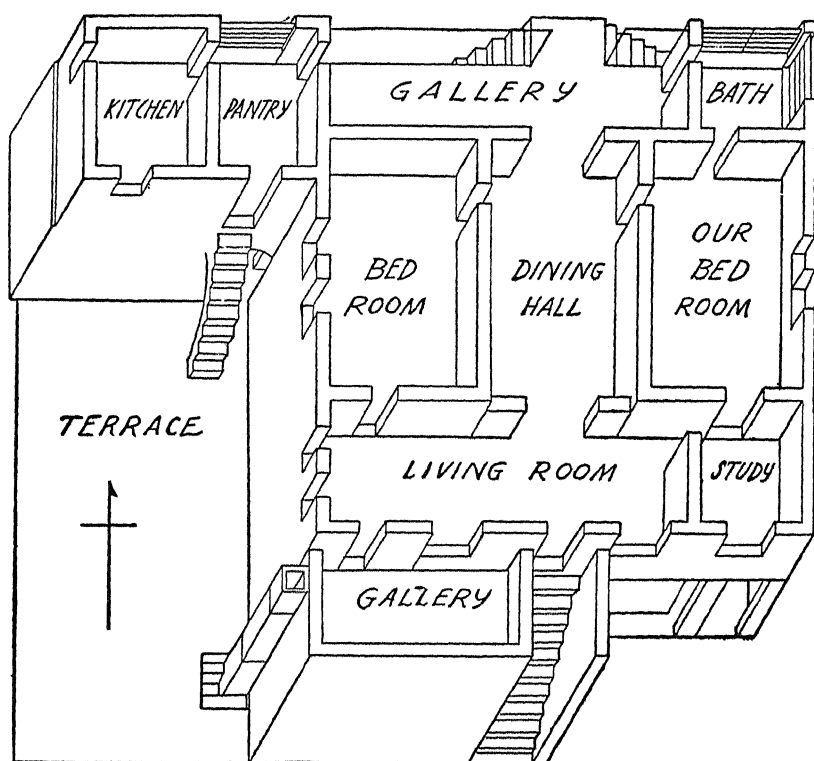
Our first inspection had been desultory; afterward, we could not remember the arrangement at all. But even then we recognized its exceptional qualities. On the outside, it was much like every other house of the island which we'd seen: a great square of cream clapboard, supported high on cement pillars, for coolness and ventilation and to defeat boring termites and tropical rains. Only the flowers, the bougainvillea and the great samans, front and back, distinguished its exterior, although the Demerara windows added a rather pictur-



esque note. On either end of the long gallery they opened out at us, a kind of jalousie or Venetian blind propped outward with a stick from the bottom; they are as much a part of every island house as columns to a Greek temple, and their name derives from that jungle river in British Guiana where they were first used.

We hastened inside. The place was transformed now. It was not merely five or six high-ceilinged rooms, painted in the usual biscuit and beige; it was a home better than we had ever anticipated on any tropic isle. The long hall gleamed: gleamed from the dark wainscoting, and the wide-planked floors, which were only partially concealed by cool grass rugs; gleamed from the long native cedar dining table and the built-in Welsh dresser against one wall; from the china displayed there and the low brass bowl which Martin had filled with every shade of double hibiscus blossoms, from peach and rose and apricot to delicate ivory. Above the table was framed a great blue and brown tapa cloth, out of Fiji, which we had not even noticed before.

Already we could see our view, for only two slender columns and low bookcases divide this dining room-hall from the living room, which runs at right angles, its door and two arched windows giving onto our terraces and the sea. Before, everything had been put away. Now there were dull orange curtains at the windows; upon the easy chairs and window seat, where the sun slanted across, the same cloth had turned to copper. At one end of the room was a beautiful mahogany desk, upon which a polished brass samovar shone. Block prints and paintings, reflecting the life and scenes of these islands, covered the walls. At the other end was a study—but a plan is far more effective than words.



Yet the most winning quality to us then—and it has continued to be—was an altogether intangible thing. It had something to do with the fact that we were on a wind-swept hill in the tropics. There was a feeling of living out of doors even as we sat in one of the rooms. From every window this tropical brilliance assaulted our eyes. Ahead of us lay a garden and the terraced hedges of hibiscus, clipped like English box, which led our eyes on to the sea; from the windows above the desk, the saman waved its branches near, and we could see across the sunken terrace below the kitchen the clumsy fringe of banana trees and the fingers of the papaya. From

our own bedroom was another garden, and from the bath we looked through the Demerara windows toward more garden, which ran above the road, where the golden, trumpet-flowered allamanda mingled royally with a purple bougainvillea. Beyond this lay our servants' gray-shingled house, and up the hill, their kitchen under the third of our great samans. From there the hill opened out into a wide savannah, with goats and sheep and a few odd cows grazing.

All about us was a profusion, not to say violence, which throughout that first day we could not possibly digest. We were an exhausted pair when night came.

Martin Hannibal was going about closing up, securing the jalousies against possible rains, and bringing in the deck chair and hammock where we had flopped contentedly after our unpacking. And then he merely closed the rear door to the gallery, saying it wasn't necessary to latch it. We looked at each other dubiously. Well, our black man should know. . . .

Everyone has experienced the same feeling. It wasn't just that we were newcomers to this island, nor that we were isolated in the midst of darkness, which made the two miles to our nearest white neighbor seem an endless distance. It was simply that this was a strange house, and we suddenly felt our aloneness. At the guesthouse there were electric lights, and people stopping in for planter's punches. Now we had taken up residence in the middle of the island, on the site of one of the more remote old estates.

In the wavering light of the little kerosene lamp, our bedroom seemed even larger, for the black corners and the high rafters might have stretched on like some endless cavern. Our figures were two gigantic shadows upon

the walls. With hardly a word we undressed quickly, and Jeff jumped into bed, pulling the light blanket high about her ears. Heath blew out the lamp, and his bed creaked. For a minute there was silence.

Then, "Heath."

"Yes."

"Don't you think"—hesitantly—"that we ought to lock these bedroom doors?"

"Well, that might be a good idea."

Padding about, flashlight in hand, Heath pushed and snapped locks on the three doors. Neither of us said anything more.

Again, silence. Then a noise: a ladder scraping the side of the house, and whispering footsteps on the grass.

"What's that?" in unison. But not very loudly.

With our torch we crept to the window, and let it play over the garden below. It was only a horse, having a feast on the hibiscus.

We laughed with relief, feeling slightly ashamed. Privately, we both resolved we'd go to sleep now, and no nonsense.

But we were scarcely settled before we heard more footsteps—this time we *knew* they were in the house. Then a loud creak. With one quick motion, we unbolted the door and flashed the light on the intruder.

He was not there.

"It's just expanding boards," Heath said in disgust. "Come on, now, let's quit it and go to sleep. A new house always has queer sounds the first night."

From our beds we could see the stars—millions of them. A faint breeze brought a sweet scent from the garden, and rustled the many leaves. What evil could possibly inhabit such a spot?

Slip, slip—creak!

We must have dozed off, but with this new disturbance we were awake instantly. We held our breaths. It was the same sound of someone walking stealthily.

*Bang!* A distant door had slammed hard.

"All right, let's look again."

With a great show of courage we noisily entered the living room. And like a scene out of a comedy about the haunted house, we explored every nook and cranny of Terry Hill. It was, of course, quite empty.

We began to laugh with more real enjoyment. "If only someone could have seen us!" Jeff gasped. "All we needed was that accompaniment of spook music. You know—*da, da, da, da, daaaaaah, da!*"

We had located most of the noises. The footsteps were the slight movement of the rugs from the wind whistling under the door. The faint, unearthly whinnying sound was a loose-hinged window, and the sound of a baby crying was another window, left unhooked, which had been swinging back and forth in the soft night breeze. The squeaking outside with an occasional thud was the bats in the sapodilla tree, knocking the fruit to the ground.

But the next day Martin had another explanation. His big eyes widened at our dramatic account, which had lost nothing in the telling. "*Jumbies*," he informed us mysteriously. "Dey walk about nighttimes, 'cause people was buried right here."

It was a long time before we heard anything more about those strange beings. They and the house noises failed to bother us, for we were at last beginning our adventure. The fable was being replaced by reality.

## *Day Cleanin'*

THE first few mornings we were startled from our long slumbers by a hoarse cacophony that broke our hilltop quiet. *Coc-ri-co, coc-ri-co*, the birds squawked their names over and over again. Soon we learned that a law protects these tropical pheasants except during a short season, but many have been the mornings that we wished Martin Hannibal's refractory friend Scipio would go gunning again on the ridge.

The cries grew fainter, and we heard only the cheerful trills of the smaller birds in the mango trees. The soft breeze quickened, stirring our curtains and rattling the casement windows. Then the calls became more insistent again as the sky stealthily absorbed light from an invisible source. It was six o'clock, the beginning of the tropical day whose length has changed little in all these months.

Slowly a miracle unfolded before our eyes. From our beds we watched the light increase as the sun approached the crest of the east ridge. Beyond the jagged outline of the sapodilla tree just outside our big double windows, the sky grew to dull silver; the ridge below was still black and formless. None of the variations on the theme of greenness was yet visible; the scene appeared innocent of that tangle of growth—that untouched jungle—

which the British so informally and with a kind of courteous intimacy call merely "the bush."

The crescendo was reached as a violent orange patch was suddenly painted on our cedar clothespress. It was to be a fine day: a mackerel sky was pinked by the first rays as the sun came up over a distant ocean horizon which we could not quite see from our beds. Once the color had come it was a matter of seconds before the sky was all flaming polka dots against a deepening blue.

This miracle engendered an excitement which has never palled. But that first morning particularly we shan't forget. We wanted to jump up, dress and explore—to see that it was all real. For there is nothing quite like a tropical dawn. A freshness pervades the air which is seldom rivaled elsewhere except on certain perfect late-spring days. No wonder that the black people call sunrise "day cleanin'."

Sometimes in the weeks and months that have passed since then this moment has been a very different thing: a very important moment to us always, which we want you to feel as we have felt. Other dawns, a great cumulus cloud has hidden the brilliant focal point of light until it began to glow at the edges, from which rays of fire radiated in all directions. Perhaps we would hear a sudden faint, shattering noise, and rush to the windows to see a short and passing rain veil the whole scene with sparkling silver diagonals. The ridge itself would still be dark, although not a mere outline any longer, but full of shadows which pointed their long fingers at us. Distantly, in the saddle between a low point and the mound of a farther hill, a triangle of ocean would turn to molten gold. Dew lay upon the devil grass of our lawn, and upon the garden, each miniscule drop glisten-

ing. In an incredibly short time, it would be dissipated. . . .

Very soon our morning routine was established and it has changed very little since then. This declaration sounds dull; why has it never come to be that in our minds? Probably, we suspect, because we seldom forget that we have wanted just this—and our expectations have more than materialized.

Partly, too, because it took us a long time to grasp all the elements of the complex nature of the tropics which intimately surrounded us. So that, writing now, we can describe what we first responded to without knowing precisely why. At the outset, an idea alone transfixed us.

Like all city people we immediately expressed our new freedom by a change of costume. Good clothes were put away from bugs and mildew in the press; shorts and shirts and sandals became our daily attire, which we hung at night, according to island custom, on a long rack, an "airer," by the windows. All bedrooms in the tropics tend to be bare-looking, and are only places for sleeping at night or noonday siestas. And because this is a bachelor's house, there was no dressing table, so Jeff fixed one out of an odd mirror, a small mahogany table and a huge cushioned footstool that could serve as a chair. Our bath is of course plain and untiled, but somehow seems luxurious. On two sides are Demerara windows opening upon the gardens; there are woodcuts on the walls, and we have added shells and coral sprays from the beach. The cold water comes from a reservoir up in the hills.

Martin, really, started the morning routine, and it is the same today as that first morning. Long before Heath calls for hot shaving water, even before we are



out of bed, we have grown accustomed to hearing our black yard-boy coming up the steps. The heavy tread of his wide bare feet resounds on the gallery, and we never fail to hear the great double doors being opened and fastened back. Like a ship, everything in the house must be hooked or battened down against the trade winds.

Martin has been up for an hour, watering his animals on the high savannah back of the servants' kitchen. If he is not quick about it, we hear Kate, his donkey, braying—a sound which is forever linked in our minds with Mexico, and still seems out of place here. But these are better-groomed British creatures, with an inevitable brown stripe from mane to tail, and an intersecting one across the shoulders; the difference between a bishop and a donkey, they say here, is that the prelate wears his cross upon his front. . . . By no means is this all of the livestock. There are the chickens, which Martin lets out as he goes to visit his pig—a small pig, more like the peccaries which roam the island's forests. And there are his goats, too. We had not been here a week before there were several feeble, long-legged kids to add to the morning bedlam, mingling their cries with those of the deep-voiced sheep, which used to break loose and come to nibble hibiscus flowers under our window. Then there used to be the white zebu cow—the tropical breed imported originally from India, with long pointed ears and a hump between the shoulders. But that cow will receive more attention later on in this account, together with the numerous animals of the renters, who also use our land for grazing.

Martin's first duty is to sweep out: an already established regimen had been inherited from our landlord. If we had ever intended sleeping late, the banging of his

broom about the baseboards would have soon changed our minds. Now we expect and recognize every sound: the clink as he collects ash trays, the snap of the lid as he fills cigarette boxes, the swish as he lightly waves his orange dust rag vaguely about, being careful not to disturb a single cobweb.

By this time the scent of coffee is in the air, taking on an additional aroma because the berries are from our own shrubs. The bushes were just in fragrant white blossom when we arrived, but Martin had picked and dried the last crop, and in the afternoons the even more tantalizing fragrance of roasting comes to us.

While Martin lays the breakfast table on the gallery, we hear the patter of soft feet and a fearful mewing outside the bedroom door. Our kittens are grown now, and only Nutmeg remains with us, but at the beginning there were also her sisters, Squash and Bitters. A few days after we arrived, their mother, mistakenly named Bernard Shaw—but that went so well with Terry Hill—was mysteriously killed, and we brought them up, until their stealing and mewing and increasing size forced Jeff to give away the two worst offenders.

Today, Nutmeg follows us like a dog when we take our before-breakfast walk down to the waterfall. Although the air is still fresh and cool, the sun warms us when we leave the gallery steps. Then the great saman which arches over the head of our road shows to best advantage. Yellow rays slant through its leaves, picking highlights in the growths which clothe every limb. In some of the crotches are orchids, and huge fantastic plants shaped like cabbages or lilies; actually, they are not true parasites, but live upon the air. This sight every morning reaffirms the still incredible tropics to us,

for the saman was planted only forty years ago, and now reaches a hundred feet across. Thin high palms are entangled in its outer branches, which shade the ravine to our left where the coffee trees are planted and the elephant-eared tannia that old Providence raises. To our right, on the high bank which leads back to the servants' house, is a mass of giant sword ferns.

We wind down the grass-covered road, past the lime trees where we always surprise the jacamars who live like cliff-dwellers. No other tropical bird rivals their coloring, with their long black bills, their bodies a brilliant peacock green and orange against white throats; when they take wing the iridescent colors are comparable only to the metallic tones of copper patina and ancient bronze.

A few palms tower above the bush of the ravine, overlooking the savannah which climbs the hill. Not until the junction of our lane and the main road to Mount St. George village do the cocoa trees appear. Across from them, sheltered by a high chapel of bamboo, the water roars into a sparkling pool. On days when there has been no rain and the stream runs clear, we have thrown off our clothes and descended the mossy stone steps for a quick, cool plunge. Sometimes we bring a basket, baited with pieces of fresh coconut meat, to tempt the fresh-water shrimp which grow to the size of small lobsters.

On the opposite side of the pool we climb out to sun ourselves like lizards upon the purple rocks, frightening a blue egret that flutters off through the mist into the green tangle. Overhead the great bamboo, tall as trees, creak and groan alarmingly in the gentle trades. From the growth above us lianas trail down into the rippling water, which is dappled with little globules of light that

have penetrated the interlaced ceiling of this chapel with its groined vault. One side is enclosed with ancient masonry, the ruins of an old mill from the sugar-cane days. This and all that surrounds the forty acres on our hill-top belongs to the Hamiltons, and the house was once their residence for Greenhill estate. The cocoa plantation vies with the bush on many of the ridges, yet does not even touch this romantic enclosure.

For it is romantic, every bit as much as we have described it. There have been days and hours here when we have known the kind of peace we desired and hoped for, up north. The spell of the tropics, we decide upon these occasions, is no myth at all. And a happy conjunction of the time, the mood and this particular spot strengthens our conclusion. Such a scene even in this latitude is seldom come upon; it is somehow of a piece with that magnificent section in the green mountains back of Rio. Yet whereas that is on the grand scale, our waterfall is circumscribed and more friendly. Friendly and at the same time a trifle violent and overpowering, with those majestic waving plumes of bamboo, the luxuriance of foliage which begins at the upper reaches of the stream, and the roar of water as it dashes on down between the rocks to a deep green reservoir a hundred feet below. If we peer cautiously over the farthest edge we can see the river assuming a more quiet and secret course through the green tunnel as it flows gently to the bay at the southern tip of the great crescent of blue we see from our gallery. . . .

It was all a matter of getting acquainted, those first few weeks. We were blithe then in our optimism and

enthusiasm. Ordinary matters of housekeeping and the duties of servants willingly gained our attention in this new environment. At home we would have been merely bored. That much we could see the tropics had already done to us. We had expected the island to do something to us and for us; exactly what, we were in no mood to stop and speculate.

We had not been here two days before we realized that our lives would be bound up with the little group of Negroes who lived out back. To how great an extent, of course we didn't realize for a long time. Simply, we recognized our servants as personalities that we would know better as time went on.

Old Providence interested us most of all, although he was seldom about the house. In the mornings we could hear him chopping the firewood with his stout one arm, wielding a dangerous-looking "cutlass" which is like a Mexican machete. All the odd jobs are his province, and besides bringing wood for Leotha's oven he fetches the daily coconuts, and helps Leonora Solomon, our washwoman, make charcoal for her iron. Despite the wisdom which should go with his advanced age, the servants laugh at him continually, even though they acknowledge their respect by calling him King. And Martin makes him the goat. Just this morning the old man brought the largest coconut we have ever seen here, a foot long; but it was vain Martin who posed with it for a photograph.

On the second morning we were in residence, Providence appeared with a little girl. "Good mornin', massa, good mornin', missy," he addressed us, removing his old battered hat and showing his gray wool. His attitude was at the same time subservient and dignified as he

looked up at us from below the gallery. We felt uncomfortably like two monarchs.

"This is *Present*," he introduced the child, accenting her name on the second syllable. She looked very shy and her bare toes described a circle on the ground.

"Oh? Your granddaughter, Providence?"

He cackled. "No'm, missy."

All of our blacks doubled up with laughter. We didn't understand the joke until Leotha finally told us that *Present* was this seventy-year-old's young *daughter* by his second—or third—wife. Mother and child live in the village but he prefers Terry Hill, and only on Saturday does he change from his rags and hobble slowly down to his other home for a short visit. Our landlord told us he was glad to keep him at a few odd jobs, because he was a check on Martin's high spirits. But we didn't know Martin then, nor for many months to come. . . .

After breakfast, when Heath is already tapping away on the typewriter in his secluded study, Martin comes to make the beds. For all his size, he is only twenty; and, for all his years, we soon found he was only a child. Nonetheless, he was shrewd enough to calculate that his butling kept him away from heavier outdoor work; for the same reason, with unusual gallantry, he took over what should have been Leotha's household duties.

Yet we congratulated ourselves upon his training and efficiency. Without being told, about eleven o'clock the first morning he presented himself to Jeff and asked, "Any messages for Studley Park, madam?" Errands are messages here, and this was his signal that he was ready to fetch the groceries, which had been brought from town by the van. We had arranged for the driver

to collect our provisions from a formidable Negress in Scarborough by the name of Sue. And as Studley Park runs a model dairy, the pasteurized milk came from our nearest neighbors. It was all very simple, we thought.

Besides, didn't we have an abundance at our very doorstep? In our early letters home to family and friends we dwelt mercilessly and ecstatically on this fact. "You see," we wrote triumphantly, "it really is a tropical island! On our forty acres we must have fifty mango trees—the Julie kind," we added knowingly, forgetting to mention that they were not bearing at this time of year. More truthfully we added, "Every morning we have papayas—they call them pawpaws here. You know, the pink melon with such a delicate skin it can't be successfully shipped. It is best with a little lime juice—limes from our own trees, of course. Some mornings Martin brings us—he's a regular tyrant, that department is left to him—a strange fruit called shaddock. Really, the grandfather of the grapefruit, with a very thick, pulpy rind and coarse pink meat which he scoops out and serves with sugar in a cocktail glass. Not that we haven't grapefruit, too—more than we can eat. And bananas! A bunch of twenty 'hands' is hanging in the kitchen right now. (You probably know that a hand is six or eight bananas.) We hate to tell you, but you've never eaten ones with such flavor. Picking them almost ripe does something. . . . And the fruits we can't describe—sapodillas you know, and guavas for jelly, but have you ever heard of star apples or golden apples, and mandarins? The last are like big tangerines. The other day a small black boy brought us a huge wicker basket of them, two or three dozen, for only nineteen cents. And big alligator pears cost twopence. Naturally, we

have our own Seville oranges for making marmalade. Then in the vegetable line there's the New Zealand spinach, and Jeff has told Martin to plant beet and carrot seeds."

But before Martin goes off to Studley Park, Jeff has spent a good part of the early morning making market lists for two days in advance. Then for the first time Leotha puts in an appearance. Even more than Martin or Providence, she has come to be the character of our household. Those first few weeks, however, we didn't know what to think of her. We would go out into that gloomy kitchen where she was bending over the wood stove or baking on a "coal" (charcoal) pot which looks like a Greek urn, rallying the fire with a palm-leaf fan which Providence had somehow woven with his single, gnarled hand. When she would straighten up, her brown face might seem surly and offended, and her only reply that laconic "Yes'm." Yet from a distance we could hear her chanting a hymn as if it were swing music, and her remarks evidently sent Martin off into one of his belching guffaws that nearly shook the thin walls.

When she came in to help Jeff with the morning order, her entrance was always heralded by a queer sound: habitually and constantly, she appeared cracking her knuckles. Yet neither this nor her rollicking, sea-dog gait, nor the way she tied her apron strings below her bottom, was quite as amazing as that old brown felt hat which she wore cocked impudently over one eye. (Neither she nor Martin would think of walking from their house to the kitchen without a head covering—"to keep de dew offen," they say.) This hardly explained her continuing to wear it all day long in the kitchen.

Yet that brown felt was nothing beside her Queen's-

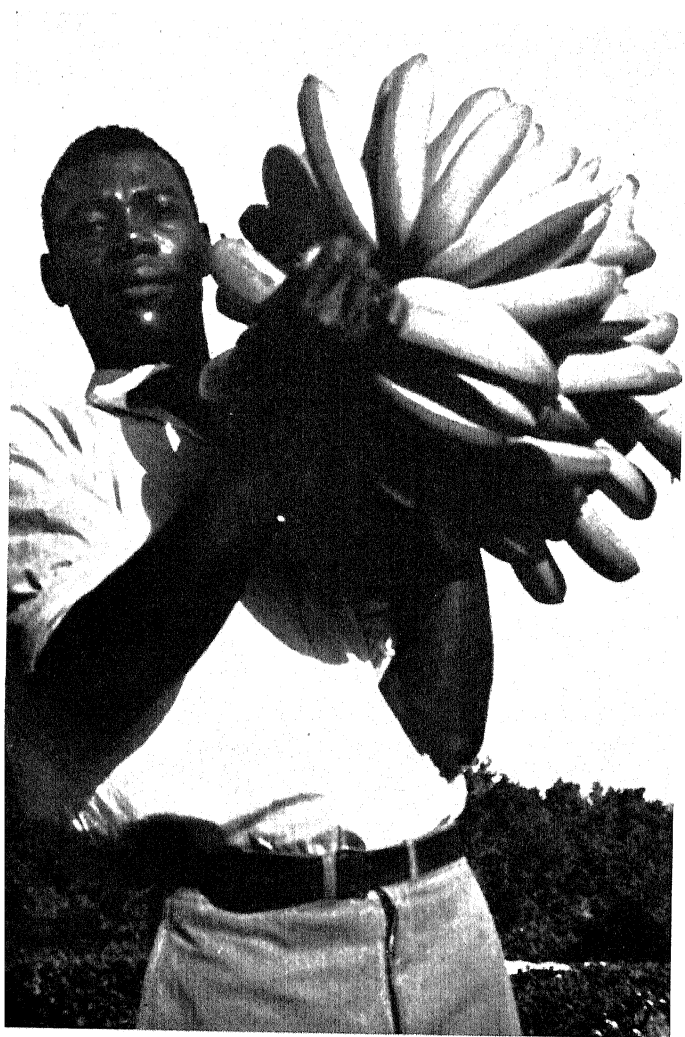


garden-party hat, as we promptly christened another acquisition. She was baking a cake when Jeff first spied it. Even today, Jeff complains that it has a psychological effect upon her, for this picture hat bestows such a transitory air upon anything Leotha is doing, as if she were about to walk out on us without notice, that her mistress finds a placating note creeping into her commands.

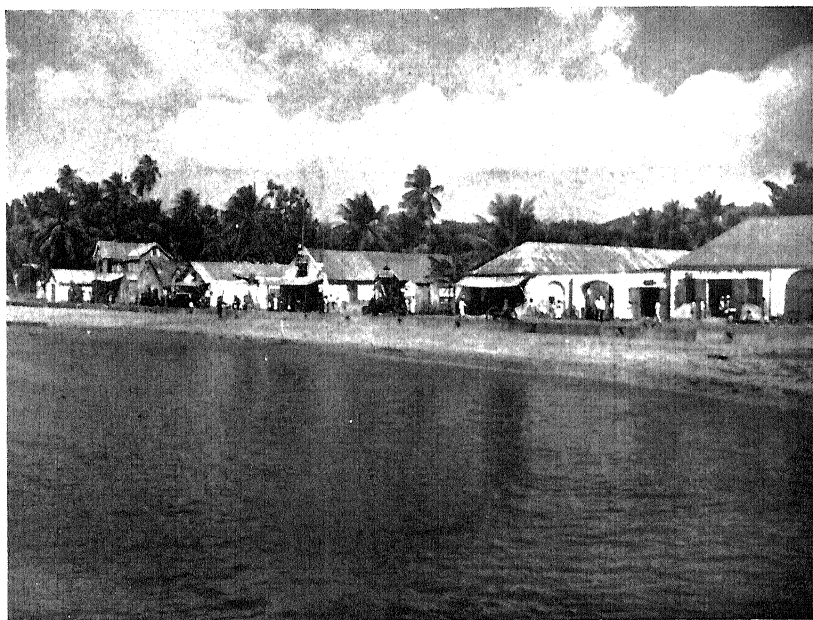
Day cleanin' has changed to high noon, the sun is directly overhead and we have stopped work in favor of basking on the front terrace by the time Martin reappears, his shirt wet through and his black face shining with sweat. He comes to us with a large wooden tray, the sort the village women carry on their heads. And always, from the first day and doubtless to our very last one here, he voices that perfect Martinism, that acme of redundancy:

"I've returned back, madam."

By the end of the first week we had grown wise enough to expect certain changes and omissions in the market slips that he brought us. A piece of tough beef would probably be substituted for red snapper, and there would be no tomatoes or fresh vegetables if the market was slim. We thanked our stars for our garden spinach, and the tinned goods we had forehandedly ordered from Canning's. At least, we repeated, there is fruit; and we had discovered that baked green pawpaw made a very palatable dish. Then, too, there were always villagers appearing with eggs or chickens to supplement our own, and sweet potatoes (yams) and okra and red peppers from their provision gardens. And more than



*Hannibal victorious.*



*Courtesy Deborah Currier*

Our first dawn, the waterfront was deserted.



*Courtesy Deborah Currier*

There is a frangipani, too.

once, we made a hearty meal on cocricos and doves, or the land crabs which creep out on the road after a rain. Also there was calalu soup, made from a kind of green and garnished with the crab claws; what it lacked in taste, it made up in West Indian authenticity. And Jeff knew how to roast wild plantain, the cooking banana, as it is done in the South Seas. You can be sure we exulted in our partial self-sufficiency, particularly in our letters home. Remembering that great symbol of the tropics, the palm tree, we emphasized the many uses of its meat, which we ate like candy, and its milk, squeezed through muslin and better than whipped cream for fruits, and its gratings for cake.

Yet Leotha would view any omissions on the market list stolidly, without comment, and was only raised to mirth by Jeff's early struggles with the currency. Jeff, who has the sort of feminine mind that turns somersaults whenever confronted with figures, could not understand why the paper notes were Trinidad dollars, but the silver English. A dollar was worth four bob and twopence; a shilling was twelvence but twenty-four cents. Now, really! And she was rather ashamed by the lightning way the most ignorant villager could turn from one sort of counting to the other. Eggs, they would tell her, were a penny. Well, Heath had told her pence are cents, multiplied by two. Pence are cents—then a ha'penny. And she would extend that small copper to be greeted with giggles from our domestics and the sellers alike. "Two cents, madam—one whole penny," they explained, and she would be lost again.

On the days when Martin brought us, besides disappointing grocery slips, mail from home, we felt suddenly jubilant and superior in our retreat. Tuesdays, Thurs-

days and Saturdays the coastal steamer comes over from Trinidad with the local newspaper, the *Guardian*, which is not bad at all. But the latest world news was eclipsed by any airmail. Only three days from New York or Chicago, and four from California! It had taken us ten days by boat.

This was isolation without lack of communication, and it made us feel quite complacent. And already we were receiving visitors. The view from Terry Hill drew them, chiefly under the Hamiltons' insistence, and we have made many friends that way. So, in a sense, the mountain started coming to Mahomet almost before we realized we were here alone with our blacks.

## *As Advertised*

LIVING on a tropical island is largely an adventure of the mind, and the five senses. At least so it has been with us. If you take anything for granted, too much of the fun is lost. Yet from the start we couldn't help expecting and anticipating; like everyone else, we wanted the reality to conform with a preconceived notion.

Above all else except a hot sun, palm trees are the most essential symbols for that bothersome old fable. And if their need is pre-eminent, their setting has to be a sandy beach. From our hilltop we saw these elements from afar, and as soon as we were thoroughly settled, we decided to take our lunch and try the swimming in Barbados Bay. After all, we had come to Tobago as much for the surrounding blue waters as for the island itself.

On the road just beyond the waterfall the steamy land enclosed us; the high bank was moist with ferns and moss and plantains, while on the other side the little cocoa trees dipped into precipitous ravines, and we glimpsed our white stream spuming down its narrow course. Hot waves of air from below suggested the real tropics far more than our pleasant, wind-swept hill. Yet we liked that, for it seemed thereby we could smell and

feel the luxuriance which assaulted our eyes. And we were dressed, or undressed, for the tropics.

Hot lands are not subtle in their contrasts, and we passed from dazzling brilliance to the cool dark shade which patched the winding road. Occasionally black men and women came along, singing their good mornings. But we were alone when the most startling sight affronted us.

As we rounded an innocent curve the view suddenly opened out, and we beheld a ravine flaming with coral immortelle blossoms. Framed by a few palms and outstretched cocoa limbs, the wide blue crescent of Hope Bay lay at the far end of the prospect, enclosed on one side by the knoll of Mount St. George village. Towering above the cocoa which they had been planted to shade, these flames-of-the-forest presented a stunning filigree against cobalt sky and aquamarine sea.

As we remember, we didn't say anything much; we hardly exclaimed aloud. Because, you see, it was too breath-taking and so utterly unexpected. True enough, we had gained an inkling before, but the clue had left us unprepared. At the end of our road by the waterfall we had watched one giant immortelle tentatively put forth a few salmon-pink flowers, but we had been unappreciative. Now the whole center of this picture before us was a great, spreading bouquet of coral blossoms.

It is a very firm tenet of the fable that the tropics are unchangingly green. But no northern wood was ever painted more vividly than this. It was a happy disillusionment to us, and to every visitor who came to Terry Hill during those two or three months when the flowering remained perfect.

Since that time, the ravine has turned back to green, as we note when we repeat that first walk. Even so,

the hues and shades are endless, from the chartreuse of the bamboo and the yellow-green of the newly leafing samans, to the almost bluish tones of the slim, white-barked trumpet trees, and the dark olive or bottle green of mango and logwood and cassia. Yet nearly the whole year through, the cocoa trees along the road add a more lasting color note. From every tree, whose thin trunks and short limbs are silver-splotched, hang the pods—now mahogany-brown, red or orange, now pale lemon-yellow or lettuce-green, pendulous and bright as so many ornaments on a Christmas tree.

Who said that we could trust our imaginations to enhance natural beauty? But at least, we remarked then, the sea and its strand were known quantities. We had seen some nearly perfect lagoons in various parts of the world, and our only hope was that our new bay would not fall too short. We wanted the same thing, the same experiences, over again; we did not want to be surprised, and we would have been sorely disappointed if we had been.

There is a branch which leads off to the left from the way to the village, and we took this down through a hotter sun to Studley Park Crossroads, below the estate house. A great thick mango shaded the place where the blacks come for water, and near by was as picturesque a collection of thatched houses as you will see in any romantic painting. About the doors were—and still are, of course, but this is how we first glimpsed them—red hibiscus and scarlet bougainvillea and the multicolored croton bush, all mahoganies and yellows. Just below was the sparkling bay, only a shade deeper than the cerulean sky. The early morning light had burnished the palms to shining gold.



Yes, it seemed good, it looked from this distance quite complete and up to our exacting specifications—as advertised.

But the beach itself? We hurried on down the road which to our exasperation wound interminably. At the Studley Park dairy we came upon the palm groves, and walked down a vaulted aisle and crossed the windward road that runs along the coast the length of the island. On the far side of it a frontier of immensely tall palms shielded our sandy beach.

We had forgotten the *quality* of this kind of tropical landscape. Fleetinglly we had seen it from a car as we made our first excursions in search of a house, but now we could stand still—and listen. A great part of the feeling, the emotional impact of the scene, emanated from the sounds: the way the waves hushed up, and the distant roar of that thunderous fifth one, traditionally louder than the rest; the crackle as it broke, curving over into white foam along the line like so many tin soldiers falling, one upon the other. And then the sucking sound as the white combers tentatively licked higher on the warm yellow sands, and the hiss as they retreated once more in thin webs of froth.

Above us the palms rustled dryly in the trades. Upon the far hills which hugged the bay at the lower end—the part called Hope Bay—was a more indiscriminate green, but along the beach only the palms leaned far out over the sand. A little way beyond, a stream had cut deep as it flowed toward the sea. For an instant a scudding cloud obscured the sun, and then we knew certainly that it was the brilliance and the heat which imparted this especial quality. The ordinary appearance of the elements underwent a metamorphosis: while the sea was

transformed into millions of dazzling, insubstantial star points on every lifting crest, the sky became a dome of very solid blue.

We were the highest bidders for this half a mile of beach, and we took it.

At the upper end of the bay where Granby Point tongued out, we found a little cove of flowering thorn trees beside a shelf of wet rocks which the low tide had just uncovered. As we approached, scores of little black crabs scurried off into the sand-bottom pools that had been left behind as the tide turned. And one lone ghost crab, its shell nearly transparent, crawled off with its crazy, sidewise motion toward its hole.

In this shady spot we cached our sandwiches and a bottle of water. All about us the sea, changed to endless shades of green, sloshed and sprayed the rocks until they were a deep and lustrous brown. In our tree-cave it was cool, but the exposed rocks and sand burned our bare feet as we started to undress in this natural cabaña. The only person about was a Hindu, back in the palm groves tending the dairy cows; but as a last, begrudging salute to civilization, we properly attired ourselves in bathing suits.

It was as well we did, for a small black figure appeared in the distance coming toward us. A long way off it stopped at the edge of the waves and seemed to be watching something. We paid no more attention and waded out into the warm water. Just beyond where the surf began a dozen brown pelicans were comfortably riding. One would rise awkwardly and circle with a lazy motion, then dive with such sudden dispatch, dropping like a plumb, the wonder was the bird didn't plunge its long beak deep into the sand bottom. For an instant after it

came to the surface again its flexible pouch was distended as the fish was swallowed.

The pelicans were moving in and we began splashing, just in case they mistook us for their natural prey. Then we saw a fish leap right beside us—a silver flash, and it was gone. There were hundreds of small fry all about us in the transparent shallows.

“I’m not sure I like that,” Jeff said a little doubtfully. But the water felt so good. We hadn’t ventured far out, and were lazily floating.

The black figure had approached us by now: a man with little else but a loin cloth, holding a great net in both his hands. Perhaps we were disturbing his prey; we came out of the water and spoke to him. He began mumbling in quite incomprehensible jargon. Finally we made out the word “sharks.” If we had not been previously told that the bay was quite free from them, and nearly reef-enclosed, we might have been more than a little anxious.

“When de little fish come in close,” the fisherman explained, “dey’s chased by big fish. Shark after dose big ones.”

As it turned out later, this was a false alarm, but of course there is always an off-chance in tropical waters. Worse than a shark, which would not be a very large one in such shallow water, are the barracuda; they strike, so we’ve heard, without reconnoitering. Still, we’ve never seen even the most cautious lady tourist deterred from swimming; it’s one of those things to be mentioned because you doubtless are wondering. To tell the truth, we’ve been rather disappointed; we had hoped to come upon at least a small “sea cat,” an octopus, but the only

life we've discovered since then are the brightly colored tiny fish which are marooned in the rock pools. Nevertheless, we erred on the side of discretion until the tide started to turn, and there were no more fish coming in. The pelicans, too, showed their indifference by disappearing. Perhaps there are more unmistakable rules, bound up with time and tide, but our ignorance has not been costly.

From this end of the bay Granby Point was hidden by jutting rocks, which were bared at low water so that we could climb along the shoreline; the land itself was too overgrown and we could not find the path. At the very tip was the old fort, as a few stones still bear witness, and from here we realized the extent of the bay which curves around to Mount St. George—just a few specks of houses in the surrounding green.

The point itself was narrow and we crossed a swampy part to the booming surf of unprotected Pinfold Bay. Immediately we felt the full strength of the trades, which blew a salty spray into our faces. By contrast with the other side it looked wild and almost savage; this was no place to swim. The very presence of a small, useless and scrubby islet called Smith's Island added to the abandoned feeling. When our neighbor at Studley Park, which includes the Point, dug the drains for his coconut groves here, he came upon an old parade ground cemented hard as stone. And perhaps at the time of this garrison Pinfold Bay received its name, for pinfold means an enclosure for animals, or a pound; our map gives it that title, but the reason is lost in another century, and today it is usually called simply Fort Bay.

The black fisherman was gone when we returned to the

beach and the cubbyhole where we had put our lunch. That day there was not a sail on the horizon, but sometimes since we have seen from our windows at Terry Hill a whole flotilla of small craft, or talked with the men on the beach as they prepared their lobster pots, great traps of latticed bamboo. The men who fish from the beach, standing motionless knee-deep in the tide, their black figures silhouetted against the silver sea, are usually after jacks, a kind of sardine. With one effortless motion they throw their whole bodies forward, and the net flattens out neatly upon the surface and quickly sinks. But the boatmen are after bigger catches. Early in the year, they brought in delicious red snapper; then, only six weeks ago, the dolphin started running in great schools, and later there will be many others. Out near the horizon almost any tropical fish can be caught.

That stretch of beach, all to ourselves, was enough sport for us. If you have ever had such a strand quite alone, you know well enough the feeling of liberation it gives. As an expression of what we felt that day, we ran far down the beach, our toes cutting deep prints in the soft yellow sand. By the time we had cooled off again in the surf and come out dripping, our lips tasting of salt and the sun and soft wind drying us, we were ready for our picnic.

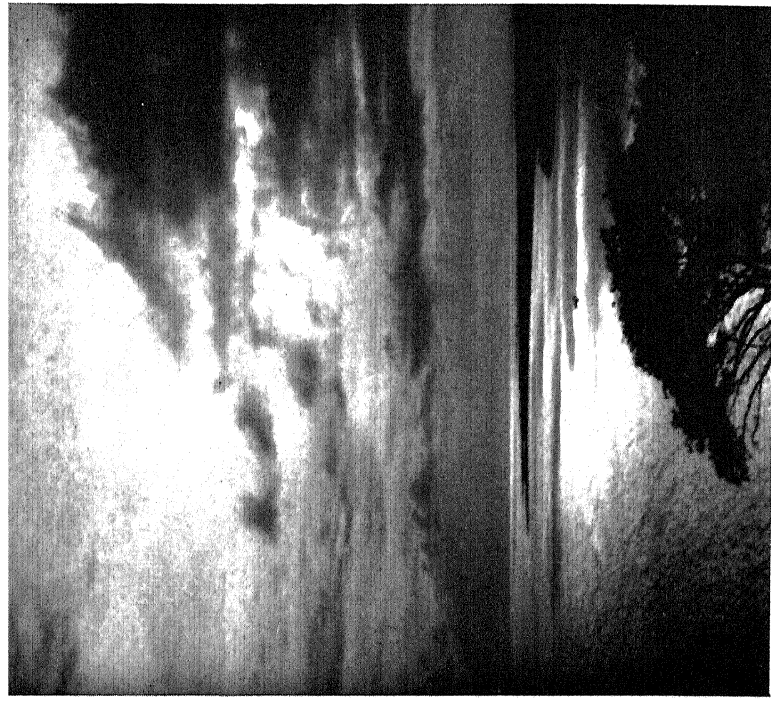
There was, you see, nothing really extraordinary about that day, or any of the many succeeding days we have spent there. Nothing except a supreme sense of well-being which came slowly as we lay in the shade after we had eaten. Imperceptibly we succumbed to the blue of sky and sea and the gold of that increasing noonday sun. We might have been alone in all the world. And yet, although it was two miles by road from our hilltop,



Soon it will be different.



The twins brought mandarins.



*Courtesy Deborah Currier*

From the fort, the lizard's tail.

through two slanting palms we could just make out the red roof and the spreading saman at Terry Hill. Everything in so little space.

It can be explained only in paradoxes: the quiet violence of the scene, the tight spaciousness of this small island, which did not seem at all lost on the real immensity of blue ocean. The sounding silence. The simplicity of line and elements, of color in a tropical place where no two forms are the same, taken individually. A village not far off, and yet looking small and distant. And all this view, this private beach, ours any day we wished it.

Our dreams of the West Indies were coming alive for us by the time we had journeyed to the bay. Yet even as Terry Hill, it was a personal place, with chiefly ourselves against a landscape that pictured some aspect of the tropics. In Mount St. George village, we soon found, there is a more authentic atmosphere of these islands. Or perhaps we should say more of the sort of "local color" you see so picturesquely portrayed in travel booklets and cruise literature. There on a knoll, which afforded us another striking view of the wide-mouthed bay, we saw the blacks in their own setting. The setting was necessary, for we had seen plenty of them on the road. Against a gracefully bending palm, or a crazy shack overrun with scarlet flowers, these black women, always carrying some pitcher, some wooden tray or snowy pile of laundry upon their heads, corroborated not only the fable but any posed and studied photograph we had seen.

And often there was a cart drawn by slow oxen, and always around each door two or three naked pickaninies, their fat little bellies sticking out impudently and



the whites of their eyes showing as they half-bashfully, half-brazenly saluted us. Even the shacks were picturesque; we could not feel sorry for a people in such a magnificent setting, no matter if we knew that ten people slept upon the floor in one or two small rooms. Most of the houses were unpainted, but not one lacked a few gingerbread scallops at the eaves, or a little tin cutout in the form of a flying bird, surmounting each gable spire. And at each window, without variation, billowed curtains of the same red rose pattern. Yet it was the people most of all; here were the angular West Indian blacks, the crones with clay pipes in their mouths and bright kerchiefs on their woolly heads.

Yes, it was all these islands were supposed to be. The surface, at least, fulfilled the fable. . . .

On days when we have taken our picnic to the beach and come home late in the afternoon, we can hear Martin's lawn mower as we climb our road. We know that he has rested overlong, and that when we are away he will work slowly, but we are prepared for the same picture: Martin in old blue jeans, wearing a fantastic felt hat which is exactly like those worn by the buccaneers. He will inevitably be mowing the stretch in front of his house, rather than the lawn nearer our gardens, so that he can stop and talk to Leotha, who sits on the window sill embroidering, or joke with his great friend Scipio, who entertains them both with a kind of wavering melody from his bamboo flute.

"Hallo, Martin! Not making Scipio do the work today?" we banter him. For the slightest favor his friend, who is really shrewder than Martin, does a bit of the work.

Martin tries to look solemn, but he cannot contain his laughter, and he bubbles over with one of those great guffaws that breaks his face into a white-toothed, disarming grin. He would much rather we stayed at home and played badminton on the lawn, which is our usual exercise, so that he could stand behind Jeff and act as a clumsy ball-boy; we have never requested this service, but he is too childishly enthralled for us to send him away.

We are hot and steaming, but a shower cools us. The water shatters off our bodies in silver ribbons and soaks the floor, for we have no curtain. Then Martin must be retrieved; he hates mopping up the bathroom after us, and putting out the towels to dry before sunset. Yet his work is nearly done. And ours, too, on the far more usual days when Heath has stuck to it until late. It is enough to be assured that our island is as advertised, that the bay is there. And now comes that soft, pleasant hour of sunset. . . .

## *Sunset*

YESTERDAY afternoon, as they have every single day since we came, the yellow-tails began to sing their clear, four-noted song in the lower garden. As the shadows lengthened and the orange light slanted across the west ridge, outlining the shining fringe of palms, we could see these large birds swinging on the delicate tips of the bamboo. Then like arrows they shot across our vision to the near saman tree, which is one of their favorite feeding places.

Long after we leave here, this cry will persist in our memory. You yourself have experienced the same sort of association: perhaps some sweet, pungent odor evokes a whole scene for you, or a configuration of colors, a chance phrase in a foreign tongue, or even an ordinary object—not characteristic of the scene at all yet forever linked with that one place. For nearly everyone a melody will do the trick most thoroughly; a popular tune will conjure up an otherwise forgotten house party, or an especially romantic moonlit night, somewhere in your past. Then most of all nostalgia becomes overpowering. Outwardly you may only sigh, or draw a deep breath, but inside you feel torn almost beyond bearing by this remembrance of things past, by the flight of time and the good things gone irrevocably. For your memory will happily retain

only the best elements. In those moments you will perhaps turn a little philosophical; a great deal will be expressed by your sigh. . . .

Something of the sort is in store for us, we have often remarked, if by an odd chance we should hear this bird's cry in another land, or if someone should happen to whistle its refrain. Then we shall remember Terry Hill most vividly.

For the yellow-tail's four notes, clear as a bell, are a melody in themselves, and we are always wanting to set it to music; it has all the syncopation of a modern dance tune, although no two people agree whether it sounds woody like a xylophone, reedy like a flute or metallic like a chime.

The blacks call them corn birds, because they are death on the patches of maize that grow on the hillsides. Some evenings we hear the distant, haunting trumpet call of a conch shell, blown by the gardeners to frighten away these pests. More properly the name is cacique, which is of course the Spanish for "leader." They are cousins to our American orioles, and build the same long, bulbous nests which they hang from the high limbs of the immortelles. Their orange-yellow beaks and tails at the extremities of their long black bodies make them a conspicuous note in the landscape, and they fly indeed like an arrow shot from a bow, their wings moving too fast to see, their whole bodies streamlined.

Frequently they have another cry, when they flap their wings, which seems to us like a mere show of spirits, an ebullience only akin to the inexpressible noises of well-being we make as we cool off under a shower. This squawk, bubbling and comical and rather like a squeaking gate, is quite different from their other notes, which in

reality are eight rather than four, the pairs coming quickly together, with longer intervals between:



Usually we "dress" for dinner; this means merely changing into clean shorts, which are our daily uniform. One of our chief joys is that we need never wear neckties or stockings, and that here we can practice Scotch thrift by wearing out our old clothes to the bitter, tattered end.

Fresh from our shower we go out on the gallery fronting the sea, and Martin brings the ingredients for cocktails. Every tourist knows the planter's punch of all the West Indies and some go back reciting the traditional recipe:

One of sour,  
two of sweet,  
three of strong,  
four of weak.

That is, lime, sugar, rum and water. Actually, however, the planter knows too much lime juice is bad for him, and in any case he usually prefers cocktails. This is even simpler: rum, water, a little brown sugar (muscovado, they call it) and of course a lot of bitters, floating on the top in a pink layer. Yet the Angostura which is now made exclusively in Trinidad seems less bitter than the familiar brand they export to the States. They say it was originally a medicine for diarrhea, and as such it still appears on our tariff. The proportions of other ingredients are secret, but contain about forty-five per cent rum.

Martin enjoys making the cocktails and with great triumph, on odd days, he announces that we have ice. At

home the British may have the reputation for lukewarm whisky and soda, but in the tropics they like their short drinks iced, and whipped into a froth with the well-known swizzle stick. Our American callers are always enchanted when we explain that Martin has made our stick from a twig of the wild cherry—a kind of guava, which the last week or two has been thick with red berries. Others say a tree called the yellow gasparee makes the best ones, and in other islands we have seen hard black sticks whittled from the grugru palm.

Everyone has remarked the ephemeral but violently beautiful quality of tropical sunsets. Frequently at Terry Hill we have noted unusual lines of mauve, chartreuse and violet in the spectrum of colors, delicate transitions in these symphonies of light. Here the tropics more than live up to their fabled beauty, but if your favorites are seen only among the mountains, or upon a plain where the dust glitters at sundown, we shall not do battle. Half our respect is no doubt due to the quickness with which we must view the colors. Unlike the bright hues of garden and vistas that are forever with us, this moment of sheer beauty, compounded of the most perishable stuff, vanishes after a magic instant.

Meanwhile the tones of garden and terrace grow unbelievably and dangerously more verdant. No picture could do justice to the actuality; it is a dream come true a hundredfold, a sight which changes so frequently as the days go by that we never cease to exclaim. Out to sea, between the layers of clouds, glows every shade of blue, from deep cobalt and sapphire to turquoise, robin's-egg, peacock and powder blue.

And through the yellow-green foliage a bluebird darts into the saman to feed on the magenta blossoms of the

treeplants. Often, too, at this time we see a flock of parrots, seeming to protest as they make their slow, plodding flight across to the far ridge. Parrots, like palm trees, symbolize the tropics to most minds. These little ones, with just a touch of yellow at the breast, always fly in pairs, and usually in sixes; never do they hesitate or alight near the house.

By now the orange light has caught only the tops of the trees. For a moment the wind is stilled, and through the twittering of the birds we hear the faint booming of the distant surf in Barbados Bay. As the light fades, an owl hoots faintly. Already the bats that live between the galvanize and the wooden ceilings have begun to scramble down to the drainpipe, swooping away from the eaves like a squadron of airplanes. Nutmeg watches them with interest.

It is time to go inside and for Martin to light the lamps. He has drawn the curtains to discourage the bats from sailing through the house, and we settle in our easy chairs beside the carved teakwood table. The lamps are still turned low, but already we smell that slightly burning, hot odor of the mantle as the kerosene flame makes it begin to glow. We are enclosed in a little circle, a warm pool of light, which fades off to each end of the room so that only the brass samovar faintly gleams, and the orange drapes alone give color. Nutmeg, loath to come in, settles herself on the window ledge, still intent upon the bats; but it is too dark now. A moment before the sky was faintly luminous, now it is black as midnight. The dark half of this equatorial day has begun.

As we drink up we discuss the work accomplished. Heath often reads the latest chapter of the novel, which Jeff tears mercilessly to pieces.

Presently we are conscious of Martin standing in the archway. Usually he clicks his heels together, military fashion, to attract our attention. Then comes the inevitable, nightly question,

“Are you ready to feed now, madam?”

Supper is served.

Soon we are deep in our books. For months this has been our unchanging habit, and as a consequence we have read more than we would in a year at home. Here it is never a question of whether we should go to the movies, a party or see our friends. And we are afraid this routine suits us. We had come prepared with some thirty volumes, not counting dictionaries and reference books; more have been sent us, not to mention our landlord's supply. The old question of what books to take to a desert island had confronted us last fall, and although the choosing was at random, made up of old favorites and new doubtfuls, the other night we were surprised at what our small library divulged. Practically the whole world was represented, in fact or fiction: there were books on China and Bali, India and the great extent of Africa, from the Boers' country to the far reaches of the Nile; Conrad again represented the East, along with others to be re-read; there was a tale of the Amazon country, of Spain, of France and England, of Joyce's Dublin, and Italy; Lafcadio Hearn best represented the Caribbean. And books about our own land, from New England through the deep South and all the way west—to say nothing of the fantastic Wonderland where Alice met the Mad Hatter.

This catholic taste in far countries was not deliberate,



but we laughed at the way we had been rounding the globe from Terry Hill, as if we would never be satisfied. Would we ever be anything but wanderers? Jeff, who would rather plan a new trip than eat any food—with the exception of strawberries and asparagus—has often looked up from certain persuasive pages and begun several journeys. Yet what was most surprising to us was not that we had brought too many books or too serious tomes, which is usually the case, but that we had not been ambitious enough.

We have time here. Yes, time for the things which matter to us. . . .

Nutmeg is asleep on Jeff's lap, and the night insects, attracted by the lights, bat themselves heedlessly and in masochistic pleasure against the glowing shade, or burn their wings upon the inner chimney. The table is alive with those that have fallen and lie helplessly or buzz with anger like a short-circuited wire. If Nutmeg wakes, there will be so many less.

Tch, tch, tch, tch! On the board that forms a cornice for the ceiling a "kissing" lizard pauses to peer over the edge at us and chuck his contentment with the supply of stupid moths. Some of them approach the table, beautiful as butterflies and twice as large.

A flapping noise makes us look up. Upon the wall a great shadow is cast by a bat which swoops through our rooms half-blindedly. Jeff moans and covers her head with a book. Heath makes wild swipes at it with a magazine, but it eludes him and dives near her head, and finally sails out through the gallery.

The other night we had two more rare visitors, one

upon the other. First we heard something flop across the floor, and Nutmeg, awake at once, leaped from Jeff's lap into the shadows. A little frog had found its way in.

While we captured the cat, we shouted to Martin to bring a broom.

There was no answer from the kitchen. We called again. Only on the third call do we ever receive a reply—one of their endless superstitions. After dark, it might be a jumbie that is calling, and no cautious black, like Martin, will answer the first two summons.

It was Leotha who finally chased the frog out, but we were hardly settled in our chairs when we spied a small tarantula issuing from the bookcase. Martin lost no time killing this invader. Only once before has he "met" one of these spiders in the house. But by this experience we had lived up to the "deadly insect division" of our fable. . . .

The kitchen door slams and Martin's lantern shines along the gallery. If he remembers, he is bringing the stone pitcher of cool boiled water for the bathroom, and lighting the lamp there. Leotha collects Nutmeg and stands with the cat-thing in her arms.

"Good night, madam, good night, sir," comes the chorus. We respond in kind.

"Could you jes' give me de time, sir?" Martin peers at his old alarm clock that wheezes as if each tick were its last.

"Twenty minutes until nine, Martin."

The next sentence follows with regularity. "My clock, hit say fifteen minutes slow," Martin reports begrudgingly, because he has great faith.

To make up for defeat at the hands of time, he says to Jeff archly, "De cat, hit wish to bid you good night, madam," and he and Leotha roar with laughter. Jeff's

fondness for Nutmeg amuses them; cats are only "good" or "bad" according to their proficiency as ratters.

Again good nights are said, and Martin adds, "Shall I out de light, sir?"

The lantern flickers across the garden, and disappears. Then through the window a faint glow illumines their house. We can see gigantic shadows upon one wall, and Leotha seems to be doing some weird dance, which is accompanied by whoops of loud and savage laughter. Every night it sounds as though they can scarcely contain themselves until they reach their quarters. Whether they are laughing at our ways or merely letting out their repressed spirits, we shall never know.

## *The Simple Life?*

OUR peace was broken slowly. At first we laughed, forcing grins, perhaps, but a little proud that we could cope with anything.

The water situation, however, had almost ceased to be a joke. For the fourth morning in ten days we had hopped into the shower only to stand foolishly awaiting a deluge that never came. It seemed unbelievable that we could have used up the entire contents of our great tank on the hill. Besides, the government reservoir above us was required if need be to supply Terry Hill with eighty gallons a day. Nevertheless, the fact remained that again Martin had to send poor old Providence hobbling up the road with a note asking that more water be diverted our way. Perhaps the man at the reservoir expected a tip. At any rate, the trouble had always been remedied within the day. It was more an annoyance than a serious difficulty, for we had a tremendous rain-water tank beneath our front gallery. All that Martin had to do was fetch water in buckets from the kitchen pump.

But on this fourth morning our tone was a trifle plaintive. Even so, there's no use saying we recognized the warnings of Things To Come. We heard no distant, ominous roll of thunder as the storm broke; no whisper-

ing of the rising flood; didn't even whiff the smoke before the general conflagration.

A far more cherished illusion was at the same moment being demolished. On our breakfast table lay a plate of small star apples. Despite our enthusiastic letters, this is really a poor excuse for fruit.

"No pawpaw this morning?" we asked Martin.

"Dey ain't quite full yet."

"Well, we'll have grapefruit, then."

"Dey ain't full, nother."

And the bananas were "used up." They had ripened all at once, and there would be no more for at least another week. We had been so confident we would have fruit the year around!

Even the market in Scarborough was of little help. Alligator pears could not be had now, nor mangoes, and they merely laughed when we mentioned pineapples. None of them was "in fashion." And no one knew when the new season began.

Martin, seeming to revel in our perplexities, admitted that we needed another mantle for our kerosene lamp, that a chimney had cracked badly the night before, and the petromax—a brilliant light we had had him repair for the kitchen—was no longer functioning.

Heath threw up his hands. "Look," he said firmly. "We came here to find peace. Martin is always coming in and clicking his black heels at me to tell the latest tragedy. Let's establish a special hour for complaints. In the meantime, if I'm ever to get my work done, the study is absolute sanctuary."

Jeff agreed, and the domestics were so advised. For a few days peace did reign, although above the clattering of his typewriter Heath could hear, a tropical house being

open and not soundproof, the continued questions and discussions. The seeming unnatural balance of power in the household, with Jeff as chief arbiter during the day, puzzled Martin. Not that he disliked the arrangement; "de boss," as he calls our landlord and his master, rules Martin with a firm hand when he is here. As a consequence Martin thought any woman, mistress of the house or not, was fair game for an alibi or a fantastic argument. He would propound some absurd explanation with a sly glint in his innocent brown eyes, and when Jeff looked her disbelief, he would laugh uproariously, quite as pleased with his little joke as if it had been swallowed whole. And with perfect equanimity he informed her he had forgotten to water the vegetable garden for two days, and that what seeds the ants had not hauled away had dried up.

But during the afternoons all was quiet, except for the gentle whirring of the lawn mower, perhaps, and our typewriters. This particular afternoon was drowsy, with great cumulus formations piling above the horizon, and the trades stirring only the susceptible and lenient bamboo. Nutmeg was asleep in the pigeonhole of Jeff's desk, tired of playing with erasers and pencils. The typewriter roller especially fascinates her, and she likes to pat it with her paw as it swings past. Often she comes around in front, steps tentatively on the keys and reads the page, purring loudly.

Heath, secure in his study, and quite oblivious to the charms of the landscape beyond his arched window, was pounding away at full speed. When—*boom!* An explosion rent the peaceful air, followed by whoops from the kitchen.

Jeff was there before Heath. Right below us old

Providence stood with a bottle in his hand, peering at the rock shelf beneath the oleanders. Leotha was beside herself, slapping her thigh and doubling up with laughter.

"What's all this, Providence?"

He held up an empty bottle. "Been usin' de fuma, massa."

The "fuma" was one of those mild explosives used in small portions to blast out anthills. But the old fellow had used the entire contents. He pointed to a strange thing that looked like cellophane. "Dis be de skin ob de snake," he explained as if we were small children. "Snakes, dey always live wid de ants."

"An' dis snake eat de chickens, madam," added Leotha brightly.

We forgave him as we listened to this lesson in nature. But it was too good a chance for Martin to miss. Here was at last a male to tell his troubles to. He reminded Heath that for some time the toilet had not been working properly. Now, he hinted, was an opportunity for fixing it.

In that first month, we became amateurs in several new fields. For this was the beginning of a series of troubles with the mechanisms of our isolated residence, supposedly and reputedly devoid of the complexities of civilization.

For another thing, there was the trouble with the refrigerator. The next Sunday just before Martin and Leotha were going off for their one afternoon's holiday, we discovered it was smoking violently.

"It's getting old enough to smoke now," Jeff said sarcastically. Despite its age, this ingenious contraption keeps our meats cold and occasionally makes ice, by means of a kerosene lamp. It is a godsend in a spot like this,

and our fanciest gadget from the land of the machine.

In a few minutes Heath had managed to stop the smoking, but had extinguished the light. Unlucky Martin was summoned, and his diagnosis was immediate. "Hit need a new wick," he sighed.

We spent another afternoon over that. In fairness to us all, we should explain that this wick business bothers even the residents of forty years' standing. And Martin was comforting because he at least knew what was wrong. Repairing the difficulty was another matter. To force the clean wick through the feed takes endless patience and no little ingenuity, particularly if it isn't just the right size—and there were no right sizes available for our old model. He sat on his haunches, his big fingers clumsily trying to master the delicate feed, immensely pleased with this companionship. Any new suggestion brought him surprised, "Ah! I should t'ink dat would work," and he was eager to follow directions, until his slow-moving brain recognized the impossibility of the idea. Then his face brightened with impish delight as he pronounced, "Hit can't be employed, sir." Probably a negative statement is Martin's chief joy and satisfaction, akin to his love of argumentation.

Martin was no help, however, at the next trial, which happened on the heels of all the foregoing. Heath was jangling along on his typewriter, the words coming just right for a change, when suddenly the thing refused to print another word, halting like a car with a burned-out bearing. The remembrance of one painful day in Mexico came to him, when he had unsuccessfully torn down the same machine. Yet the trouble was solved this time with the aid of a strand of baling wire. We began to feel a little proud. What would have been a pure vexa-



tion at home, where there was a typewriter repair shop around the corner, proved on our island a curious source of satisfaction. One more detail was coped with, and our independence that much more strongly secured.

But we were riding for a fall. The next thing we knew Martin came running with an extraordinary disclosure.

"Hit seem like de sewage won' go down," he explained with relish.

In a word, the drains to the septic tank were clogged. He and Providence had already been trying to clear them with "bush rope," a kind of tough creeper. This unbelievable initiative on their part signaled the dire form of the calamity. But they were merely breaking off pieces within the long pipe, which was old tile instead of cast iron as is laid today. In a panic, we wrote our neighbors at Studley Park for advice.

They came up for tea to discuss this important question. With each new plate of sandwiches or jug of hot water, Leotha would bring reports on the progress outside. Our friends admitted they had never had any such trouble themselves. Perhaps, they blithely suggested, one of the enormous roots of the saman, which was gradually upheaving the concrete terrace in front of the kitchen, had broken through the pipe. Our hearts sank as we had visions of a corps of ditch diggers, for the septic tank was a good hundred yards away.

"I have some heavy wire—almost a cable," our neighbor offered, and Martin was dispatched to fetch it.

All the next morning we could do no work for our anxiety. As we write this, we know the difficulty has been solved by this method—we have done it again—but that day we cheered, broke over and had a rum

cocktail before lunch when all was well again. Yet undoubtedly we all were a little closer and more intimate—our neighbors, our servants and ourselves—after the experience.

"This," we said, "is one consolation for the so-called simple life. Why, in the city, the matter would have been delicately referred to our plumber. Who said we were escaping from the realities of existence?"

"Or the costs of living, either," Jeff sighed as we sat down to lunch. "Really, we can't go on like this. I've been adding up our food bills. If we lived at the hotel it would be cheaper. That doesn't make sense."

"If," Heath said enigmatically as Martin came in with the soup, "if the present clownish incumbent was really a master of the culinary art, then at least we'd feel—"

"You don't have to tell me!"

We had been tolerant of Leotha for just about long enough. In the first place, she had come to us quite mysteriously while we were still at the hotel, saying that the woman we'd sent for could not come, and that she had been a cook for a wealthy and prominent Chinese merchant in Trinidad. It had been obvious for some time that she could have been nothing more than a dishwasher. The very first meal she had frizzled our expensive tinned sausages in coconut oil and completely ruined them. After that Jeff lived in the kitchen. Yet as soon as her back was turned, Leotha managed to ruin every other dish. The most charitable excuse was that she had no flair for cooking. We could call her lazy and plain indifferent, yet cooks didn't grow on trees in Tobago, and we were always amused at the way she took her failures.

Just today, for instance, she had come to Jeff to ask, "Don' worry to use no eggs with de custard powder,

madam?" It showed a glimmering, a faint interest in her job. Jeff had already learned to write down every last thing for each menu; although that, too, was not always sufficient. Items had to be carefully related, or we had repetitions of the night she put the mint sauce on the potatoes instead of the lamb.

Now when Martin came bearing the custard in both his hands, as if it were precious Venetian glass, we knew that Leotha's concern had ended with the question about eggs. She hadn't "worried" to pay any attention to her oven.

"Tell Leotha I want to see her," Jeff demanded.

The brown felt, the dirty apron, the cracking knuckles rounded the gallery and presented herself.

"Leotha, just *look* at this!"

Her mouth widened, showing her four teeth. "Oh, Gawd, madam!" She began to giggle, covering her face and peering through her fingers coyly. "Dat oven, I jes' forgit all about hit . . . I was so busy wid your mendin'."

We sighed and sent her away. You can't remain angry with Leotha though you see through her excuses.

Yet the fact remained that it was costing us more to feed our two blacks than ourselves. They put away unbelievable quantities of yam and tannia and dasheen, not to mention our rib roasts and the choicest red snapper. Part of it wasn't even going out the back door and down to their families in the village, but right into the bottomless pits they called their stomachs.

We mentioned this latest problem also to our neighbors at Studley Park when we went down to call a few afternoons later. Politely, they concealed their amazement under an explanation. "But we don't feed our

servants here in Tobago," they told us. "The families of all the blacks have their own provision gardens and can feed them for nothing. It's an ancient custom—over a hundred years old. You give them sugar and tea and tinned milk now and then, and a bit of cheap salt fish or salt beef. It's the food they like and are used to."

Although our domestics hadn't objected to our diet, tradition afforded us a chance to economize; our budget was another persuasive factor. According to American standards, Martin was not earning a great deal; yet he managed to buy pigs and sheep and goats on his eight dollars a month. Leotha was paid five for her bad cooking and little else. It was a dilemma, however, that we had encountered in other countries: should we knowingly continue the humanitarian and benevolent gesture, or save money so that we could stay here longer? Aside from the fact that we couldn't afford to feed them, we would be setting a precedent, not only for the owner of Terry Hill but for all the estate people.

In the meantime our landlord wrote that he was very angry with Martin for imposing upon us. Neither he nor old Providence should be fed, and they knew this quite well. If they continued, he would fire them straightaway.

With that encouragement, we summoned Martin. For once he had no argument and no alibi; the boss had decreed, and he was scared. That night there was no wild laughter as they washed dishes. But in their own house, they recovered their spirits. And as a peace offering, the next Sunday Martin brought a large alligator pear to Jeff.

Leotha, however, was our own problem, for we had hired her with no such understanding. With fear and

trembling, Jeff tackled her, feeling sure we would be left cookless.

That was back in the days before Leotha was loyal to us, and we were totally unprepared for the good-natured way she accepted the situation. Life took up the normal course it does on every estate here. Our blacks began preparing their meals in the kitchen out back—and what meals! Their “tea” in the morning was light, but “breakfast” at midday was a kind of outlandish stew that old Providence confected for them. He would fill a great kettle with rice and yams and all the other tubers, adding whatever else they happened to have, from plantains to salt fish and red peppers and calalu. Our sympathy was wasted, for they gorged delightedly on this unsavory mess until they lapsed into a torpor, and slept off the effects.

And best of all, our food bill was cut in half.

Our troubles seemed to have ended, for Leotha announced she would prepare a whole supper by herself. Yet we awaited that dinner with skepticism, wondering what spite or revenge she was planning. To make us ashamed of our doubts, it was the best meal we had had at Terry Hill. From time to time she has lapsed into her old ways, but from that moment we knew she could be depended on when guests appeared.

It was too good to be true. Why had Leotha so cheerfully turned over a new leaf? That wasn't human nature. The series of events which had brought her down to us, when only Martin knew that we were about to move in and needed a cook, the way he laughed at her jokes, and the fact that they slept in adjoining rooms in their shingled house, began to have a new significance. Besides, her increasing girth confirmed our suspicions. One morn-

ing, Jeff went out to the kitchen and found Martin preparing the coffee and fruit.

"Are you getting breakfast, Martin? Where's Leotha?"

"Uh—yes'm. I should t'ink she has a—a cold, madam."

"Well, I'll get an aspirin for her."

Undoubtedly, this was not the first time Leotha had been sick in the morning. Our landlord, who likes to hear the news, wrote back, after we had told him, that certainly Martin was the prospective father. "He has always been rather intimate with the nurses at Studley Park. Give him some Epsom salts," he advised us. "This may be locking the stable after the horse has gone, of course, but I find that dose keeps him well in hand. Monday was our regular day for it."

Tacitly the situation was accepted, until we realized what might be the consequence. In a few months we were expecting the family on a short visit; perhaps at that crucial moment the blessed event might occur. "I'll have to ask her," Jeff decided, picking up her courage.

It was a great joke to Leotha, and she was not in the least offended. But she absolutely denied the accusation. "Jes' good livin', madam," was the explanation for her size.

The circumlocution was obvious. But also the die was cast: we could hardly sever a family, and by now we had surrendered to any and all eventualities. Just where and why, we wondered, had we ever dreamed of a peaceful, untrammelled existence on a tropic isle?

*A Tower Fit  
for a Buccaneer*

GUY CURRIER brought the cocktails out to us on their gallery. We were spending the week end with him and Deb at the Tower, near the lower end of the island.

"You're not the only ones," he said dryly. "Our dinner always cools on the table."

We barely stirred from the hammocks as we saluted them with our drinks. It was pleasant, being away from home for the first time.

"Oh, that Florence!" Deb sighed. But she was quite resigned. She and Guy had come down here from Boston nearly a year ago, and had lived around in various parts of the island ever since. They had recently moved into the Tower. Shortly before we arrived they had found an incredible bargain in Fifi, a so-called car, and had taken us away from our isolation. "It's not you alone," Deb continued comfortingly. "You'd think we might have learned to cope by this time—but honestly, these people! The other day I very carefully told Florence not to fry the venison more than five minutes. But she went right ahead and began it before we'd even mixed the cocktails."

"Oh, well," Guy shrugged. He never lets anything bother him too much. "Cheerio." And he raised his glass.

Why did we feel so lazy and unconcerned? We seemed to be miles from Terry Hill and our troubles, as if we were on another island.

Not long before we had gained a new perspective on the land stretching out from us at Terry Hill. One day we had climbed through the bush to the ridge east of the house. For the first time as we looked back we saw the full, impressive breadth of our samans, their umbrella outlines clear against the blue sky and one towering cloud. All but the red roof was lost in green. That familiar ground from such an unaccustomed angle became again new and completely exciting.

All the more breath-taking was the vista which there opened out below us: the blue waters of Hope Bay, the ravine full of coral immortelles. But beyond that lay the arm which protected Scarborough harbor, climbing to the pinnacle where we could see the Warden's residence, the lighthouse and the old fort. And we thought of Robinson Crusoe, who, a year and a half after he had been cast upon this island, mounted such a hill and "fairly descried land, whether an island or a continent, I could not tell; but it lay very high, extending from the west to the WSW at a very great distance." Only years later did he discover his man Friday, who told him those long purple undulations along the horizon, only some twenty-two miles away, were the northern mountains of Trinidad.

Later, we had been driven up to old Fort St. George itself, and the whole end of the island lay below us. Now



we saw a closer and more intimate picture from the Tower, but it would have meant less if we had not come directly from hills and bush, and had not studied our excellent topographical map. If, some cloudless day, we could fly in a plane over Tobago, high enough so that we might take in its twenty-seven miles of length, we are sure we would have the same impression of its appearance as the map gives us.

For Tobago looks like a shimmering green lizard, lazily sunning itself upon an immense blue carpet.

The gentle northeast trades must have streamlined its contours, lying as it does in the direction of the prevailing winds. Yet at the northern end, to windward as they speak of it, where the Atlantic and the Caribbean swirl about its nose, the headlands present a bold and high green front. Almost immediately, however, the blunt head is eaten away on either side by two bays. From here, down three-quarters of the island's length exactly like an off-center spine, runs the Main Ridge which gradually shelves off to the southwest of Terry Hill; the Tower is the last eminence before the ground subsides into the lowlands, a soft green upon our map. But the orange of the hills (so colored on the map) at the upper end all run counter to the spine, and the little blue veins of rivers, which have worn the volcanic earth into deep valleys, cut through as they plunge down to the countless bays that scallop the shoreline.

The part which we were viewing from the Tower this afternoon appears on the map as the lizard's tail, which it has turned and flicked due west. This was the scene before us, upon this little knoll five miles beyond Scarborough and nearer the leeward coast. Great Courland Bay, which has figured so thoroughly in the island's history, lay just behind us, concealed by a protecting ridge.

Back of that, still farther up the coast, lay the little deserted town of Plymouth where Guy and Deb had taken us another time. But from the estate house at Grafton is the best distant view, showing that little tongue of land with its toy village, like a child's cardboard cutouts. There is a tiny steepled church, and little red-roofed houses, even with cardboard cows grazing on the bright green savannah next the battery. The rusty old cannon have been remounted on new supports, and the stone parapet rebuilt. It was easy to visualize a fleet of Frenchmen sailing in, but the town gave a more concrete glimpse of those olden times. A black crone took us to the famous grave beside a half-ruined mansion of coral blocks. The inscription on the slab is partially obliterated, but enough is still legible to be mysterious and tantalizing—for no more is known:

“Here lies Mrs. Betty . . . who died November 25th, 1783. She was a mother without knowing it, and a wife without letting her husband know it except by her kind indulgences to him.”

Plymouth was once the most important town on the island, and its wide streets, now grass-grown, were laid out carefully in a neat checkerboard, so that there is a stirring quality, a pathetic air, about those small clusters of shacks, dwarfed by giant palms, set far apart from their neighbors across what must have been Royal and King's streets. Now, small black boys play cricket where once the soldiers of His Majesty paraded.

Guy was filling our glasses again, and our musings were cut short. Deb and Jeff were in a huddle talking

about Mrs. Bruce. This estimable black lady is the island's Schiaparelli, and at Deb's suggestion Jeff was already indulging in the fine English cottons and linens she had found in the Scarborough stores. With the skillful aid of Mrs. Bruce, Deb was saying, you could have a whole summer's wardrobe for practically nothing; it was the one true bargain in these custom-ridden island colonies. Today, Jeff has followed out that early advice, and will be going back with a dozen dresses at a price which would make a northern *couturière* blush.

"Drink up," Guy was telling them. We had to dress and go out for dinner, for this end of the island was as social as we were isolated at Terry Hill. They took us up the winding stair that ran along the wall of their circular living room. There were three floors, one small circle above the other; our beds, festooned with mosquito bars, were on the second level, so that we were promptly christened the layer-in-the-sandwich.

As we dressed we stopped frequently to look through the tiny windows set in the thick walls to view again a scene which held for us a strangely associative quality.

The Tower itself had a great deal to do with it. And always we shall recall how we saw it during our first week on the island, when we were searching for a house. The day was perfect, with massive thunderheads piled above the sea. Upon this knoll looking out over another sea of coconut palms to the turquoise reef of Buccoo Bay, stood this round, squat tower of stone, an old wind-mill converted into a house. Two wings had been added, one the gallery where we had our cocktails and the other at right angles, containing the kitchen and bath. But these wings were complete with crenellations along the top, so that it might very well have been a fortress, or

a lookout, if not quite lofty enough for a proper lighthouse. Then, too, that winding inside staircase against the clean white wall gave us the impression of a seaman's hangout; we immediately felt its kinship with things nautical, as if there should be a couple of little brass riding lights at the door, a binnacle for a newel post, and a ship's clock, softly ringing the watch.

Perhaps for these reasons, and because we had seen Bluebeard's Castle at St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, we linked this place with childhood recollections of pirates and the Spanish Main. Here was a bit of the old fable which Terry Hill could not claim. We would have been not at all surprised to see a black flag with skull and crossbones floating from the Tower, nor to see a couple of the old buccaneers themselves toiling up through the forest of palms, olive green and gold in the sun, from those yellow beaches. On those startlingly turquoise reefs an old galleon might have been wrecked, and the one lone tree before the door reminded us of the instructions in *Treasure Island*, and of the adventures of Jim Hawkins and Squire Trelawney and Long John Silver. That sentinel was an obvious invitation to pace off fifty steps, turn right, sight to the distant Sheerbirds Point, advance one league and there dig down two fathoms deep for those buried chests full of glittering jewels and dull, weighty pieces of eight.

Of course, Guy pointed out as he and Heath waited for the girls, the scene had changed in the last generation. Once those estate names of Orange Hill and Bon Accord, Sandy Point and Auchenskeoch, Golden Grove, Friendship and Riseland had stood not for copra but sugar cane—and the land had seemed even flatter and a more brilliant green, very like our map. . . .

It was dark when sputtering Fifi brought us back again, and the Tower was a dim outline in the headlights against the immense dome of the stars. Only one or two lamps burned yellow along that expanse of lizard's tail—one near by was the constable's station.

"Oh, we're civilized down here," Guy chuckled. "Police protection, and everything. And useful, too, with their telephone."

"Like hotel service," Deb added. "Why, last Saturday when we had to meet the boat at dawn, they came over to wake us up."

Life was different, all right, at this end of the island. We had enjoyed a delicious dinner at another winter resident's house, and it seemed like old times when Guy suggested a nightcap. The girls yawned sleepily, and weren't interested, but one rum led to another until Guy and Heath were being summoned from the floors above. "Why don't you come to bed?" they were wearily asked. "It's two and we've had to listen to everything you've said. You're saying it all over again. We know every mountain in Arizona, every piece of horseflesh—"

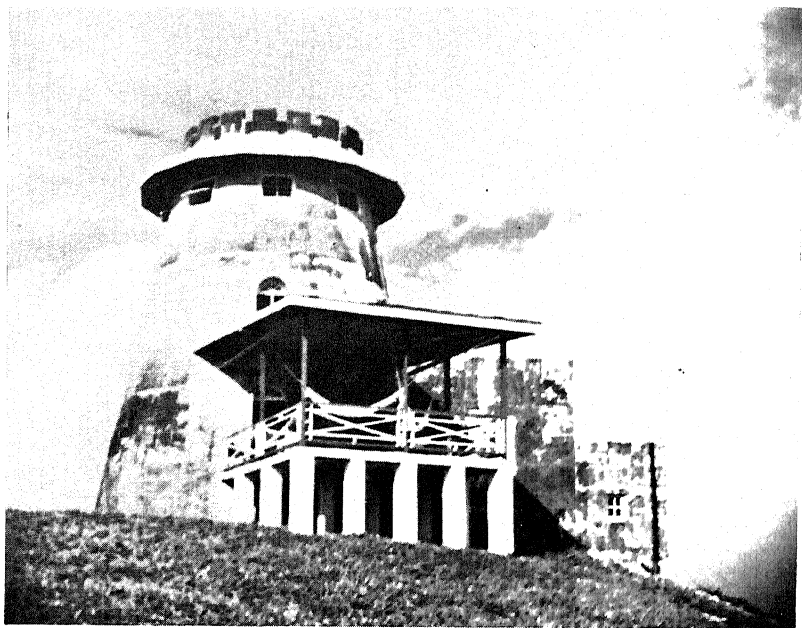
But there were a few points yet to be covered, they felt, as the level grew lower in the bottle, the ash tray filled and the petromax went dim and yellow. It was five o'clock before the house was quiet, and the males had blown off all the steam they had been saving for weeks on end. The girls murmured about the morrow.

"That'll fix us up," Guy reassured them. "You've never taken a better tonic than Pigeon Point."

Between the palm groves, neatly hedged with cactus, the coral roads were dazzling under a hot sun as we



For the beach at Barbados Bay, we were the highest bidders.



"Fit for a buccaneer."



Pigeon Point: Tobago's Lido.

drove down that Sunday morning to the aquatic club at Pigeon Point, which is Tobago's Lido. There was a pastoral effect here, the land gentle and rolling, that was nearly reminiscent of England, and certainly of the level isle of Barbados. How could small Tobago contain so much variety?

The road led straight into the groves at the very end, where a schooner lay at anchor, ready to load the enormous sea turtles that were tied along the shore. Farther on we could see the blue-green water lapping a white sand, with a few thatched bathing houses blending into this picturesque backdrop of palms. More cars than we usually saw in Scarborough were parked in the sand, and people in bathing suits were sitting under umbrellas, or around the bar, reading *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*. A black boy was serving rum cocktails and tomato juice and—yes, actually!—hot dogs in buns. Guy and Deb, who knew everyone, introduced us to the island society. A few of the planters at this end always turned up here on Sundays, but for the most part we were meeting Americans and Canadians, the few permanent winter residents who had rented houses and those who had come down in the jitney from the Hamiltons' Robinson Crusoe Hotel. They were talking about their tennis matches or their golf, about friends who had flown down to Trinidad. A Pan-American clipper had even landed in this very lagoon. And the regular service to Port-of-Spain took only *thirty-seven* hours from New York.

We were startled, we felt like country bumpkins coming out of our hermitage. Then they said, "So you're from Chicago? Do you know . . ." And for those few hours, on an incomparable beach eleven degrees above



the equator, we might as well have been home, or at any resort.

Yet this was hardly Tobago as we think of it. The tourists have been few, and on any day but Sunday we have come to find the beach almost deserted. And we like to remember Pigeon Point on those more quiet afternoons. For nowhere else, in any part of the world, have we seen such a perfect setting, such ideal swimming. The fable is not brought to life; it is superseded by a picture beyond the rosiest dreams you can invent.

On drowsy afternoons we have lain on this soft white sand which shelves off toward the booming reefs, leaving water clear as crystal near the shore and a jade green far out at the breakers. Above us the thick wall of palm fans rustled ceaselessly in the soft breeze. But we were on the tip of the island, closed away from it, alone, so that we belonged more to the changing greens of sea than to the emerald land.

Lazily, we have walked along the beach, hunting for shells. At the point, the waves have washed up all the beauty of marine life. Some of these great conch shells we have taken for doorstops, bringing to our hilltop the shining cones which from their sharp points to their star-shaped ends range from delicate pink through deeper rose to yellow and lavender. From that spot we have lugged away huge pieces of white coral, and a graceful spray of royal purple, flat and branching like an espalier.

Beyond the point, the land stretches back toward Buccoo and Mount Irvine bays, and in the distance, seeming worlds removed, are the purple hills of our Main Ridge, the tops shrouded in those thunderheads.

## A TOWER FIT FOR A BUCCANEER

After the Curriers left, and had stopped off at Bermuda to acclimate themselves by degrees to cooler temperatures, Deb wrote us a perfect analogy of this island virtues. "Bermuda," she told us, "is as exciting as bright new doll. But Tobago is like a lovable old Ted bear."

## *The Main Ridge*

WE had been lost on the eastern hill not a hundred yards across the ravine from Terry Hill. But there was a good trail which led up the slopes to the Main Ridge. So far we had only skirted the edge of the island. What lay in the center, in that unfrequented part which for over a century had been a government preserve?

We decided to take a long hike. The night before we had told Martin and Leotha to make sandwiches as soon as they put on the coffee for breakfast. As usual, things went wrong. All the bread was unaccountably spoiled; the loaves were damp and moldy.

"De bread didn't soak long enough, madam," Leotha suggested. We thought she meant it was not thoroughly baked; but soak was really the proper word. In Scarborough, if all the bread isn't sold one day, it is moistened and put back in the oven to "freshen." This time the process had not been quite completed.

Martin himself volunteered to fetch some penny rolls from the village, if he could not borrow some from Studley Park. We finished breakfast and had pored over our map, yet still he didn't return. Impatiently, we decided he had met a friend on the road, and we expatiated on the unreliable nature of these people. Or perhaps he had finally killed himself on that bicycle. We might as well call off the excursion for the day.

After we had entirely lost hope he came sweating up the hill. There had been not one roll or loaf of bread in the village, there was none to be spared at Studley Park, and he had had to ride halfway into Scarborough to find any at all.

The sun was high and it was already hot when we started up the Castara road, which leads on north from the waterfall. Our objective, some eight miles ahead, was the top of the Ridge, but the trail descends from there to the small coastal village of Castara, on the other side of the island.

The short way to the reservoir was familiar. Below us Greenhill river gently flowed down to the pool, and bamboo shaded the road. At the reservoir we left the road for the moment, but we were beginning to climb to the life-source of Tobago's fertility. On our map all the blue veins of streams and rivers show they originate along that lizard's spine of high hills. On both sides of us now were the low cocoa trees, and presently we passed below Mr. Hamilton's cocoa storing house which tops a knoll a thousand feet above the sea. There was the dank, fermenting smell from rotting pods and fallen leaves as we rounded the hill, climbing higher. The immortelles were still in blossom, and coral petals lay scattered upon the road. From here we had our first vista of rolling green hills. Yet the ocean was obscured behind them. On the Ridge, what a sight we would command!

An old man in blue rags, cutlass in hand, was following along behind us. He caught up as we stopped to examine a flower beside the road.

"Excuse hit please—good mornin', mistress, good mornin', sir," he sang politely, tipping his old hat. "We calls dat flower de Pride of Barbados."

We thanked him, and started on, because most blacks have a solemn way of boring you with obvious explanations, once you encourage them, as if you were a newborn child. Respectfully, he kept ten paces behind us until we stopped again, and there he was, to tell us the name of another flower.

"Bondé bush," he explained, pointing with his cutlass at the deep-red leaves on the hillside. "For de boundaries—to mark de limits."

It was a good idea: the scarlet stood out distinctly from the greenness. After that, we accepted our informer as a guide. Or rather, he adopted us. Where did we live? Terry Hill meant nothing; it was still Greenhill Great House to him. And we were going just for the walk? (He cast an aside at a group of his friends who were sitting on the ground, splitting open the bright-colored cocoa pods.) "Here black folks' property," he remarked. His name was Morrison; he was a woodcutter and walked up here every day. And when we came upon two men with a queer-looking animal tied by its paws on a stick hung between their shoulders, he made them stop so that we could see what a peccary, a wild pig, looked like. It was an ugly little thing, but the bright green iguana that one of them held by the tail was familiar and hence less gruesome, for we had seen many of these big armored lizards in Acapulco. Both of these they had found up in the bush, where they said they were still plentiful.

By the time Morrison had turned off on an obscure "trace" that seemed to lead right into a wall of entangled vines and trees, we were nearly to the end of the wide part of the road. One lone palm which must have risen a hundred feet or more into the sky was the sentinel

beside the turn-off to Caledonia estate. This, we had heard, was historical ground; at this pass into the hills the English had attempted to hold out against the French. Yet the trail ahead of us, no more than a path, might as logically have echoed to the tramp of redcoats on this very day, as to us. There were no centuries here, and the bamboo which arched over the road, excluding all but a faint light, interlacing the highest branches like a great medieval vault, belonged to no man at all. We had heard that this center part of the island was almost untouched. Certainly there were no more cocoa trees, no more signs of cultivation. Only the white quarter-mile posts showed that any man had been here before; the path was overgrown with grass, and we walked softly.

Occasionally a king-of-the-forest swooped across, a flash of iridescent peacock colors, the bird's queer tail ending in a little blob of feathers, like the weight on the end of a pendulum. It is fantastic but authenticated that they are not born so, but actually pluck out the feathers in the tail to form this design.

We were quite alone now, winding through a still forest where only the birds cried out. We seemed to be walking on a plateau, yet no vistas opened before us. The Greenhill river had reappeared again, rushing musically away from its source on the Ridge, but now on the right side of the path.

It is quite impossible to describe exactly the various configurations a jungle will assume; each one is easily recognizable, it might be drawn and colored, but words utterly fail to conjure up these different pictures. The very word "jungle" is misleading, although convenient. Nowhere but deep in the tropics could such dense undergrowth exist, yet the jungle is so clustered with associa-

tions in the old fable that it seems almost unfair and dishonest to use the term. Not for a good deal would we have left the trail, even if we could have taken two steps without hacking our way with a cutlass. Perhaps this is what the word has come to mean: a fearful thicket, filled with a nameless dread. It is not that Tobago has poisonous snakes, and the chances of being attacked by a wild pig are as ridiculously unlikely as being bitten by a timid armadillo. But in Martinique we had driven through just such violent country in a car, and had been told of the *fer-de-lance*, the most wicked snake in these islands. They had been brought there to keep the slaves from running away into the bush; they had continued to breed long after emancipation, so that the mongoose had been imported to kill them off. But that contrary animal prefers chickens.

Sometimes a harmless little bright-green snake would slither noiselessly across our path, and there was a beautiful one with a yellow streak down its back; even Jeff, who has a woman's natural dislike for these things, was not startled, and we admired their colors, at one with the surrounding foliage. Still, we were glad for a cleared path.

A few of the elements which gave the varying character to this wall are quite describable. As we joined the river we came upon the first of the *cocorite* palms, which from there on increased in abundance until they displaced all their brothers; we had never seen them before. They have no trunk at all, but begin to bend their graceful, fernlike leaves outward from the very roots, so that the effect is of a giant plume. Their appearance signified poor soil, although their fruit was an enormous cluster of thousands of small nuts which

contain a fair amount of oil. Doubtless if we had been sharp-eyed naturalists we might have picked out the kinds of lofty trees which were now towering over bamboo and palm. Near Caledonia an old estate was once named Nutmeg Grove; one variety of this tree is native to the island, and somewhere in the forest, perhaps before our eyes, were specimens growing wild. But how were we to know, when we had not even recognized the cashew nut trees at the foot of our terrace, because they were not in fruit?

The parasites and airplants which had taken root on our samans were here repeated in endless numbers. Most common was the bromelia. It is fantastic and awkward; yet the graceless line of its skeleton, like a denuded Christmas tree, was clothed with cerise and lavender.

Perhaps these few items themselves, together with the greenish-yellow light that filtered through, marked us as intruders from another and more sensible world. Everything was odd. We had been speaking of the "bush," lumping all greenery together in contrast to those palm groves and reefs near Pigeon Point; this was as different from Terry Hill as from the lower end of the island. Yet even at this altitude the soil was often sandy, and just as we plunged into the thickest tangle, where the path was wet and muddy and emerald-green moss and tiny ferns patterned the steep, half-lit bank, we would round a corner to come into the blaze of pure golden sunlight where a small savannah of tough grass had spread away the forest. Green parrots squawked overhead as they flew fearlessly close to us.

It was a curious paradox: the clear air, the hot sunlight beating through, the distinctness with which we saw each varied leaf-form—and yet the tumultuous jumble



which knew no beginning or end, which seemed to devour the island until it often claimed half our narrow path, and we walked single file.

Weirdest of all was a great banyan tree, which sent its limbs down into the earth as roots again, until there was hardly any telling which end was properly up: an evil tree, its arms like snakes against the dark green. The greatest mystery was why it should be growing high in this virgin country, when it is not a native to this hemisphere.

We had been climbing along a narrow ledge which overlooked a drop that might have been precipitous if it had not been so overgrown, when we literally burst upon a clearing. Along the trail and almost hidden by the high grass were a few hibiscus bushes and banana trees. And upon a knoll stood a tumbledown shack. Who had once lived here, and cleared away the bush? What soul had wanted this complete isolation? A black man would have fitted better into the scenery; the darker races, Negro or Indian, seem more in keeping with wild places than any white man.

Whoever the inhabitant, he had given up and deserted. We thought of Crusoe; there was something friendly and reassuring about this old shack. And for the first time we saw distant undulating hills, stretching to the south and east—one green hill after the next, hiding our view to the blue ocean beyond.

We were climbing higher, and almost immediately we advanced into a dark tunnel. Shafts of sunlight were scattered until they seemed to come from opposite directions. The small drops of brightness were reflected from a thousand leafy surfaces, from tiny ferns to great elephant ears and the broad hands of the thin fan palms;

the rays were so slashed by thousands of trunks, leaf-patterns and lianas, that we lost all sense of direction. We did know we were winding up a slow grade, zig-zagging from one side to the other, and even clear around vagrant knolls, for on the sunny side were small trees, their stunted white trunks so close together life was all but choked out, and the dry ground was gravelly. Around another turn, and a thousand odors assailed us—of vegetation rotting, of life beginning, of flowering and pungent woods. Our approach sent dozens of green and brown lizards scurrying off with a rustle of fallen leaves and a tinkle of loose pebbles.

With the same suddenness that the shack had come upon us, and with less reason, we came upon a freshly hewn board, lying across our path. If it had been a skeleton we could not have been more surprised. A few rose-colored chips littered the ground, and the smell of the newly exposed wood was sweet. It was a great board in every dimension and had been hacked fairly smooth by an ax. Shades of Crusoe, indeed! And we had thought ourselves miles from anyone.

To prove us wrong, a faint hollow sound came from far in the forest, and presently we discovered a rude place where the woodcutters brought down their great trees to cut them into boards. Back in these forests lie an untold wealth of hardwoods. The cedar of our furniture, the cypr of estate-house floors, the fine crappo and the tough blackheart all come from here. A whole tree, capable of yielding a hundred square feet, with a base as large as our seamless round coffee table, can be bought for two dollars; for three more it can be landed, ripped and made into boards. And yet they talk of gold and diamonds up here.

Far in the past, folds were lifted into anticlines to form these lofty hills, and the upheaval may have started the volcanic action which enriched the soil. Veins of quartz have been found, and doubtless that hot furnace made precious stones and metals, according to visiting geologists. But this ridge was withheld by the government when the estates were first carved out, to preserve the watershed and nurture the rushing streams which maintain the more lasting wealth of crops.

We passed out of earshot of those distant axes. From the occasional glimpses through the foliage we saw more hills. We had come near the top. But we were starved. For an hour we had repressed our desire to eat our sandwiches; we had been waiting until we could sit with a great view before us. Now we relented, and threw ourselves down in a pleasant spot. It didn't matter that the water we had brought in a rum bottle was lukewarm, and that we could have devoured twice the great pile of sandwiches Leotha had made.

It was cool and peaceful; we didn't want to get up and go on. Jeff began stuffing the knapsack full of moss and ferns. (The next day Martin scorned them. "Dey's *bush* plants," he observed contemptuously.)

The last road marker had been a long way back, so that we were not sure how far we had progressed; perhaps the next one had completely succumbed to the termites. Certainly the high point must be near at hand. Until we had lain down we had not realized how tired we were, but we were determined to reach the top.

"I'll go on a way and see if I can find another marker," Heath said. "You stay and fill up the knapsack."

It was very silent as he went ahead. There was no break in the foliage and he was becoming skeptical. And

instead of climbing, the trail seemed to be going downhill. In a few hundred yards it grew hotter, and the air suddenly humid. The vegetation was even more rank and wild.

He was starting down the other side of the Main Ridge. That off-center spine keeps well toward the opposite coast, until it nearly runs into the sea just below Castara. It was just enough farther that, with the climb up again, we would have been caught in the early tropical darkness if we had gone on down to the village.

He ran back at a dogtrot to where Jeff was coolly digging up ferns out of the rich soil.

"Well, we're here."

"What do you mean?"

"We're fourteen hundred feet high. That's not much, but it's as far as we go."

"Then you mean—that the view—?"

Heath nodded. Of course, it had been crazy to have expected a vista through this dense forest. We were swallowed up at the peak of a tropical hill. A few weeks afterward, one of the planters told us that he had made the trip all the way down the spine, camping at night and sleeping off the ground in hammocks, and not once had he seen the ocean below.

But now we had a greater respect for that density which slopes up beyond Terry Hill.

## *Birds of Paradise*

WHEN Columbus discovered the West Indies, he was chagrined to find they were not the famous Spice Islands. And although what he sought for existed only on the other side of the tropics, many a rare and valuable new thing was found in the Americas. Since then, man has exchanged various exotics, and a good part of the colorful history of the Caribbean deals with such acquisitions. Our own samans at Terry Hill came from Ceylon; the bamboo palms which grow in clusters at the top of our road are indigenous to Madagascar—but the list is too long. The pride of being the original father to all things which most surely spell the tropics to you must frankly be shared with every land in that broad belt around the equator.

By such a system of exchange, Tobago has become the only place in this entire hemisphere where birds of paradise are found in their wild state. It is a distinction which vies with the Robinson Crusoe legend as Tobago's greatest claim to fame.

Close to the blunt green head of the Main Ridge, at the windward end where low-lying Pigeon Point meets its counterpart in Pigeon Peak, lies Little Tobago, otherwise known as Bird of Paradise Island. We had often planned to go there with Guy and Deb, but some-

thing had always interfered. When at last we agreed on a day, we were told we might be too late in the season to see the cocks in full plumage. Ten years ago Little Tobago was given to the government by Sir William Ingram as a sanctuary for these fabulous birds of the other Indies, almost antipodal to our island. It was a pilgrimage that had to be made, yet we were told most people came back disappointed; and only one white family had ever seen the dance of the cocks. This, of course, had almost become a legend and many people disbelieve it entirely. If we were extremely lucky, we would catch a glimpse of the birds. And at least we would once more see that violent end of the island where the component elements of cliff and sea conjoin.

The windward road winds along the coast through scenery which is as different in character as any of the other parts we have so far described: no other island in the Caribbean, we were beginning to realize, and few anywhere, offer so many shades of meaning, and so well answer those various exactions of the old fable.

And yet how does the whole northern half of the island really differ? We have just returned from Spey-side again, everything is quite fresh in our minds. And yet—haven't we worn out all the adjectives, and how much does a colorless noun convey?

Perhaps therein lies the secret: it is not one impression but a series of vignettes, one tumbling upon the next in unexpected conjunction.

Generally speaking, the road rises and dips and winds as we cross over those ribs which lead down from our useful lizard's spine—lead down to snug harbor and broad bay. But these are the things which we vividly remember—

The busses, chock-full of blacks, careening down the road, forcing Guy's Fifi to hug the turns; each one of them with names like *Rose Marie* and *Lovers' Lane* on their battered sides. The blacks who march along the road, endlessly, the pickaninnies with a wave for us, the women turning slowly, balancing their baskets, the men with tools, with their plodding donkeys. The endless small villages, each with a store that always bears the sign, "Licensed to sell and deal in cocoa." . . . The novel road signs, a spray of scarlet bougainvillea tied with a red ribbon—a decorative signal and a protest against the seeming favoritism of the public works department, which has its hands full. . . . The new bridge being built chiefly with women laborers; the picturesque old ford was to be eliminated, the river cleverly diverted so as to glide in a new straight line. Out of sight would be the washerwomen, bending over their linen and gossiping. . . . The narrow roads leading off to some hidden estate house, or up a short way toward the Main Ridge; no automobile can venture that far, and each trail is marked the number of feet it extends—seven hundred, a thousand. . . .

The low-lying, swampy places where the vegetation is most tropical, where alligators lie in the rivers, and the palms reflect greenly in the brown and muddy waters; where grows the caucus or cockroach grass, an incongruous name for the sweet, lavender scent it has when dried and enclosed in sachets. . . . Then in contrast those barren hills, where they say the "poison mouths" of the goats have deprived the soil of fertility, and only a few ugly grugru palms, usually fanless, survive: the sharp black stickers all about the trunk are also poison to the skin. . . .

Chiefly, the green, the palms, the sweep of beach, the booming surf partially hidden from us by those curious gnarled sea-grape trees, with their circular leaves and edible fruit. And always, the flash of color about each village shack, mahogany-and-gold, magenta, yellow, scarlet, side by side in violent profusion. Shaded by those decorative breadfruits, a notorious importation; by mango; by logwood that is used for a purple dye; by pawpaw and rustling banana. And particularly those spindly trumpet trees which drop their leaves upon the road until it is a carpet of silver curls; later in the year, the white orchids, encircling every trunk. And that age-old tamarind, largest on the island, now lending its wide shadow to a whole schoolful of black children. Too many things which we cannot even pretend to name: trees which grow only in abundance at this end. . . .

The many shacks and hamlets, but most of all, unique, uncharacteristic, Pig Village, an insulting term for this downright movie set: in the midst of a palm grove beside the sandy beach, thatched huts on stilts, pigs and naked children, smoke issuing from the doors. Primitive and picturesque, to a degree that travel folders always use a careful shot of it, excluding the more typical wooden houses on the other side of the road—but if you want to comfort your private fable, there it is. . . .

And the broad, open-mouthed Roxborough or Carapuse Bay—a name derived perhaps from carapace, the hard upper shell of a turtle or crab. And especially King's Bay, where we left the main road and drove down to the shore for our picnic lunch. Its placid water laps the sand gently, its encroaching arms protect a round and perfect mirror, the loveliest and most haunting of all the bays.



Finally, beyond that, the Main Ridge comes into view. Crest after green crest rolling away under lowering purple clouds, dotted only by the occasional red roof of an isolated estate house. And below now the sea, blue and translucent as an aquamarine, upon which lie scattered a handful of emerald islands, among them Little Tobago. Like nothing so much as the view from Rio.

Now, the head of this lizardlike island, where Speyside lies facing our objective. No land at all is flat, but precipitously descends to the ocean. There is a small hotel, one of the places Guy and Deb had stayed. But before we stopped to arrange for a boat and tea, we climbed the steep saddle and, at the top, looked down upon the secluded village of Charlotteville.

Great Man-O-War Bay, where whole fleets of wind-jammers have ridden at their anchors—one of the best harbors in all the Caribbean. At the tip of this half-circle is a small cove suggestively called Pirates Bay. The little red-roofed houses, which clamber up the steep cliffs from a palm-fringed beach, contain the largest population on the island. And every inhabitant a black. One retired British sea captain symbolically and literally looks down upon the bay from his aloof and separate hill. On the beach, the government rest house, one of a number of places to sleep for those who must ride by horseback along the roadless upper side of the island. A town that is part of yesterday.

As Speyside, not a town but a cocoa estate, is part of today, with the little hotel overlooking a magnificent scene. Violent here, but enclosed: the whole is framed by the windows in the wind-swept lounge. An African tulip tree will later join the other flowering things with its cuplike orange flames, that inevitable touch against

the otherwise unvarying blue and green. No wonder this end is the favorite of painters and writers.

Guy went to look for Christopher, who commands a boat, while we talked with a couple of the guests. "We've wanted to go over, too," they said, "but it's been so rough lately, we were afraid to chance it. These little cockleshells—"

We were a trifle apprehensive ourselves. The sea, which is deeper at this end of the island, was a dangerous purple-blue, in disturbing contrast to the placid green shallows of Pigeon Point. Whitecaps dotted the expanse between the shoreline and Bird of Paradise Island. And we were not reassured when we saw the boat riding uneasily in the surf. Christopher, the strongest looking Negro we had ever seen, was having his troubles even with a crew of three men, one for each passenger. The narrow boat did not look big enough to contain us all.

At their instructions we took off our sneakers and waded knee-deep through the combers to the boat. The waves slopped at us and we were soaked as we climbed over the gunwale.

It was the time of day when every color was most vivid. Even the gray rocks of a little island which we were passing on the lee side had turned a brilliant orange. Somehow clutching to this rocky edge was a small frame house, and above it waved the American flag! Deb told us that a remarkable old lady had lived on Goat Island for a number of years now, signaling for Christopher to row out with provisions.

Those who know her explain that she is eccentric but far from mad. Tales, all founded on apparent truth, have clustered about her: that she was once a rather well-known actress on the American stage; that she had

come here after her husband died; that she had always wanted to live on a desert island. We speculated not only on her story, but her motives: what she thinks about; what conclusions she has come to, living by herself, never able to leave her house, since only a goat indeed could scale the rocks behind her cottage. Had she discovered the great profundities, was she embittered, or at last perfectly happy? Unlike Crusoe, she was a self-imposed exile. It brought us all up sharp; we, who might have formed one of her audiences, had been rejected by an actress, of the very profession that traditionally lives on praise and applause. Not that she disdains callers. If Speyside had been more accessible to us we might have met her; a friend of ours who lives nearby has often promised an introduction. Yet one week end she invited him, only to rescind the offer the next day; dearly as she loved his company, she excused herself, after a few hours they would be at each other's throats.

As we left that island behind we shot into the open sea. The treacherous currents which Crusoe long before us had noted, plainly swirled down from the headlands. Anxiously we peered over the low side; the water was the color of indigo, evil-appearing and too remindful of sharks and barracuda. Just for this reason few people, save the fishermen, sail these waters; it is no joke to be capsized, and after such an experience many a black has renounced his profession. Men have been immersed in this sea for hours without molestation, but on the other hand—

The trades were blowing hard and we had to strap on our helmets. Gulls and frigate birds wheeled overhead, mournfully screeching. As we looked back, and saw the

conical shape of Pigeon Peak rise slowly, the land already seemed too far away. And now the waves were coming at us: we caught our breath. From the headlands, the ocean tossed high as an island, and an abysmal trough blew our way. We swallowed hard and tried to look unconcerned. We'd never ride this one—

"Give hit to me, men!" Christopher shouted, and practically alone shot the boat forward. His arms were like small trees as he wielded that long oar, cut from some native wood and with only a thin suggestion of a blade, as if it were a knife in a plate of soup.

"Take hit up!" he commanded, and began whistling at his crew like a coxswain. The swelling waves, too large to topple over into inoffensive whitecaps, came closer.

We felt the boat sway gently. The salt spray from the oars stung our faces. On both sides of us the ocean towered, then we were softly eased on high, and the troughs lay below us like great valleys. Our respect for these boatmen increased. They weren't saying much, but straining their backs against the crosscurrent, stopping just long enough to catch their breaths while Christopher bailed with half a coconut shell.

The island loomed more closely now, a high, impenetrable wall of green with no visible beach for a landing. The men headed our boat in and slowly we pulled away from the worst force of the wind. At last we were bobbing on the surf, and with a great pull, they rode us in with the combers and we could see bottom through shallow green water. We waded ashore.

The path led directly up from the little cove through a great tangle every bit as thick as we had seen upon the Main Ridge. We all were panting as we reached the top, but the four blacks, ignoring the trail, had man-

aged to scramble through the underbrush and had arrived before us.

A house stood in the clearing, but now no one lives in it. There is some tale about a murder having been committed, and they still point out what is supposed to be a bloodstain on the gallery. Twice a week, a man goes over to replenish the grain and water in special troughs made for the birds. There is a reservoir to catch the rain, for Little Tobago has no streams. And this island is probably one of the few places in the world where fruit trees were planted solely for the birds' delectation.

We signed our names in the register, and read the disappointed comments of most of the visitors. One had seen nothing at all but "two limes and a lizard." Even the scientific expedition which had arrived in a private yacht the month before had glimpsed only one or two of the cocks. But the caretaker had just come to feed the birds. Without holding out any promises, Christopher said that at least this was the best time of day, because the birds might possibly disregard us in their eagerness for supper. If we went slowly and cautiously we might see one on the wing.

Perhaps the excitement of the chase, and the knowledge of our slight chance, engendered an especial beauty in that forest. Improbable as it sounds, this island had an entirely different character from the mainland, not two miles away. Christopher led us off down a path and in a moment we were surrounded by that smoky green light of the jungle. Our footsteps made hardly a sound on the path that was whitened by the fallen leaves of the bamboo, and our way was lined by tall, thin palms which pushed their crests out into the sunlight far above.



Christopher brought us through.



Here we saw our first bird of paradise.

These were a variety we have seen nowhere else, the broom palm, looking like absurdly small umbrellas upon lengthy handles. And everywhere were the great elephant ears and the one red, heart-shaped leaf and phallic stamen of the anthurium lily. Often Christopher or one of the men would have to stop and hack through a heavy bamboo stalk that had fallen across the path.

Although in places it was profuse and luxuriant beyond accurate description, certain trees emphasized the fantasy of all these unrepressed plant forms. Along with the broom palms and anthuriums, a shiny, red-trunked tree repeated itself over and over; the kind which never grows straight and sturdy, but flows like lava, fastening an arm gregariously around its neighbor, circumventing a rock or spilling over its edges as if it were molten copper, like the curious amate of Mexico.

At one of the small clearings where a rustic bench had been built beside a feeding bowl, Christopher silenced us, and we waited, afraid even to shift from one foot to the other. Then he began to whistle: seven long, monotonous notes, the call of the dun-colored hen in the mating season. Yet we waited in vain.

As we pushed deeper into the forest, Christopher kept repeating his whistle. The wood was secret and sweet. Little paths stole off in all directions, carpeted with moss and tiny flowers, and small twigs which crackled loudly when one of us made a misstep. It was a curious sort of excitement, a concentration which heightened the suspense, more strong upon us because we had become participants.

Every time we saw the flash of a yellow-tail or a king-of-the-forest, or heard a squawking parrot, we started



expectantly. "This is a fine—" one of us began. Christopher reproved us with a finger to his wide lips.

Then faintly, we heard his call repeated.

It was like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. As we crept forward, the cry would issue from another place. If we could see just one, flying, catch a glimpse through this thick tangle. . . .

Deb had gone ahead with Christopher. Suddenly she was on her knees, rocking back and forth in her excitement. "I saw it!" her mouth said noiselessly.

We crept forward. There, high on a towering branch, sat a splendid cock, his orange plume of a tail hanging down, his bronze wings poised, his head a crest of peacock blue. He was more beautiful than we had ever imagined. Along his belly, the feathers were so diaphanous as to resemble the yellow fluff of a newborn chicken.

You have seen pictures of them, and perhaps remember them from elegant hats in the days before it was against the law to kill them. Yet we could not believe our eyes; the very name, the beauty against that tropic green, the old, old association of the exotic with all that was wonderful and secret, overawed us.

The bird vanished before we had more than a glimpse. But this one spot seemed favorable; the cocks were squawking all about us. Their cries were as hoarse and unmusical a clatter as their plumage was beautiful. One or two hens flew by, their somber tones quite unremarkable beside the brilliant males. Then we began to see them as their great tails swooped just above the tree-tops. We were quite beside ourselves.

Two of them were raising a clatter. Ducking low, we saw them come to rest on a branch which silhouetted them against the richly blue sky. And suddenly one

of the cocks began walking up and down, ruffling his feathers. The other answered with a gyration, spreading his wings like a butterfly. Then they started in earnest, bowing at each other and pirouetting, skipping back and forth along that limb, displaying their golden wings against the cobalt sky, as if arrogantly conscious of that striking contrast. The sunlight, pouring through, made their wings as transparent as gossamer. Then as quickly as they began they flew away, their orange tails flowing behind them.

The same thought was in all our minds. This seemed to be—it was a most unearthly exhibition—and yet so few—

“Is it—?” we asked Christopher, afraid to say the word.

He nodded emphatically, as excited as we were. “Dey was dancing,” he stated authoritatively. “I seen hit before.”

We were indeed lucky. Only two or three white people in Tobago had ever witnessed that scene.

## *Christmas*

Two days before Christmas we awoke late; a sudden tropical downpour had obscured the sun, which was our usual alarm clock.

"I knew she wouldn't be here," Jeff said. "And my dress—"

"What *are* you talking about?"

"Our Leonora Solomon. I don't hear her ironing. And she still has to press the dress I want to wear for the dance."

Not a sound came from the washroom under the house. And there is never any doubt when Leonora is ironing. All day long we can hear the thump, thump of the iron and the intermittent clattering noise as she puts it back on the hot coals. Early every Monday morning, while the day is still cool, we look out our windows to see Leonora, wife of Solomon, climbing our road. Balanced on top of her tattered straw hat, from which emanate those tight, corkscrewed "Guinea curls," is a basket with her bit of tea and bread. In appearance she is a typical Tobagonian in a single dirty gray shift, worn long over her thin and angular body; but she walks erectly and with that rhythmic swing to her hips as she plants one bare foot before the other.

When we hear water running in the huge tin tub, we know that washday is upon us, and every day is washday

in Tobago. For three dollars a month she takes her own time, preferring to work only in the mornings. After her tea and a siesta she ambles home to the village so that she may lean against the doorway of her shack gossiping with her neighbors as the shadows grow longer. The first days of the week see the front lawn white with soaped linen, laid out to bleach; all morning she or her daughter Cicily sprinkles it with a watering can. The latter part of the week is relegated to ironing. Once Jeff sent down a blouse to be rinsed out quickly and pressed that morning. But could that be done? Indeed not; to put her hands in cold water and then immediately use a hot iron would give them the "swells." Martin himself showed us a great raised place on the back of his hand from such a quick conjunction of hot and cold; he said he had stuck a wet fist into the oven.

Leonora, however, is a sly one, despite her coy and bashful manner. She hadn't been with us a week before she asked a favor of Jeff. Shyly, her eyes downcast and veiled by those long black lashes, she petitioned us to advance her "a few pennies." The modest manner, and the strange incongruity of her dirty rags with a truly beautiful, pure British accent, touched Jeff. "Why, I think so, Leonora. How much would you want?"

"Jes' five dollars, mistress." Six weeks' wages!

Fortunately, our landlord had warned that she would sound us out. The perquisites of her office had come to include, he said, all the old tins about the house, a little rum and some patent medicine for her rheumatism. Her darning, he did not need to mention, was the most horrible kind of patchwork, which made his best madras tablecloths look as if she might have been mending a roof.

We had so far staved her off with two dollars. Now

that we really needed the laundry, she had failed us. All the more appreciatively we discovered Martin down on his hands and knees, waxing and polishing the floors. Christmas was coming, and, bless his soul, we innocently thought, he knows we should be spick and span. He had stacked the brassware together, preparatory to cleaning that, too.

If we hadn't stepped out onto the gallery, Todd might have sat there until Doomsday, unheralded and uncomplaining. Todd is Leonora's radiant small son, and our favorite. He was sitting patiently at the bottom of the steps with a large bunch of fragrant, pink-striped lilies in his hand. With one of the gleaming smiles that transforms his pathetically thin body, he pushed the flowers at us, and a note. It was typical of so many we have received from his mother:

Mt. St. George Village  
23d December  
Tobago

Mistress Bowman  
Great House  
Terry Hill

Dear Madam

The day is rather wet I cannot risk the weather to come out, it raining all the time. It remaining 1 merino [undervest] 1 sheet 1 dress 1 white sliders [drawers] to finish iron. I'll finish tomorrow or Saturday morning. Madam I ask you please if you could advance me for the next month so as to get something for my Xmas. Please give to my bearer.

Best wishes to yourself and Mister Bowman  
From your Obedient Servant

LEONORA SOLOMON.

It was graceful blackmailing: she knew it, so did we, and her Mercury went off with the bribe.

The same morning Martin returned from Studley Park with our marketing and an unexpected pumpkin. Now we would have pies for Christmas! But that was hardly necessary, for our ever-thoughtful landlord had mailed us a plum pudding. "An' a package for me," Martin added proudly. He was as excited as any child.

"I been to de village, too, madam." He was fingering a horrible bunch of paper flowers of bright magenta with Kelly-green leaves. "My folks—dey make dese," he explained, and presented them to Jeff. In this land of flowers, he had thought he would go Leonora one better by presenting us with a more unusual gift. It was another subtle hint that reciprocity, a dozenfold, would be expected from us in another two days.

We had received this offering on the lawn, where Jeff was giving Heath a haircut in preparation for the dance. Evidently this gave Martin an idea, for later in the afternoon we saw him wandering around with one side of his kinky head shaved high up, while the other half grew well down his neck. Unnoticed, we strolled out to the garage, where he had returned to his barber. Seated on a broken chair, he was again submitting to the butchering of drunken Eli Bacchus, who was calmly shaving him up to the ears.

The great bowl of red poinsettias from our garden was the only touch of a northern Christmas. Even this familiar note was nullified by the outrageous tropical growth which shouted at us from every window. Sleepily, we awoke to this holiday in the warm sun, our minds

still full of the revelations and suggested overtones of the dance the night before. Not bothering to dress, we slipped on robes and began tying up our servants' gifts. Leotha was to receive two lengths of bright dress material in her favorite shades of red and blue, old Providence a khaki shirt and trousers to replace his ancient rags. Martin was to receive the best present of all, a handsome wrist watch. We had noticed his interest in Heath's, and we had had to explain that this type was more convenient than a "pocket engine" with a cumbersome chain, which they call a "pocket worm." Besides, he was continually bothered by his cherished alarm clock, which ran slower every day. And late as it had been when Henry brought us home the night before, we had carefully wound the new watch so that it would be ticking merrily; we could hardly wait to see his surprise and pleasure.

Providence was off chopping wood, so that only Martin and Leotha appeared to claim their gifts at our breakfast table on the gallery. Our cook's eyes widened when she saw the great box; but she proved a disappointment to us. Covered with embarrassment, she mumbled her thanks and ran, with the box under her arm, unopened. Martin was more satisfactory. With great deliberation he carefully untied the bright-colored string and folded it up to save; the crinkly red paper he laboriously unwrapped and creased neatly. Then, with a dramatic gesture, he opened the lid to the box—and his face fell. Picking the watch out from the tissue paper he held it dangling from one strap end as if it were a small, distasteful sardine.

"See, Martin," Jeff said, "it's just like Mr. Bowman's."

"Yes'm," in a completely melancholy tone. He showed neither interest nor delight.

"But don't you like it, Martin?"

"No'm," he answered frankly.

When he had gone for the toast and coffee, we stared at each other in amazement.

"Well, I'll be—!"

"It just shows," Jeff declared morosely, "you can never tell how they'll react. I almost wish we hadn't bothered!"

Martin was coming back with our breakfast. Dutifully, he had strapped on the watch. It was upside down.

"What time is it, Martin?" Heath inquired innocently.

With a bored look, he bent his arm back toward his shoulder in a sort of half-Nelson, observing his wrist out of the corner of his eye. "I can't jes' say, sir. Seems like I has to take hit off every time—"

"Well, let's see if we can't fix that"—tactfully. "Now, give me your wrist. . . . If we strap it on like this, the way I have it—there. Isn't that better?"

Light dawned in that thick skull. He chuckled and grinned. But there was one more doubt. "Hit don' go *all day*?" he asked skeptically.

We reassured him, and demonstrated how he was to wind it. His attitude changed, he showed a suspicion of pride in this new possession. Yet we should have taken into account Martin's big, clumsy fingers. "Seems like de time go too fas'," he commented within the week. As he touched the stem the hands began whirling like the wind—in opposite directions. We were disgusted, and so was Martin. Later, we found that he had left it on the coffee table, as a reproving gesture and a hint that we should have it repaired.



We had given them Christmas afternoon and evening off, and as usual they came to tell us they were going. Martin had asked if we would take "snaps" before they left, and as they emerged from their house we understood their eagerness. Our homely and disreputable Leotha was transformed into an elegant lady of color. A cotton lace frock with many flounces, the color of peach ice cream, made her almost tall and stately, and under her best Queen's-garden-party hat her hair was freed of its usual pigtails and caught up in a voluminous kind of snood. Martin was not to be outdone. His boss's old felt hat was snapped down cockily over one eye, his brown silk shirt exactly matched his scrubbed and beaming face, and his striped gray trousers belled in the approved Harlem manner so that they all but covered those incredible shoes. Tonight, as on many a day before, he would come home moaning and limping, for the elegant "patent leather" oxfords were moulded rubber, with shoelaces and boxed toe stamped on, which he put on like the overshoes they really were. Now he was all pride and vanity, swinging a cane and showing us what a fine fellow he was.

Only then we thought to ask him about the present his boss had given him. He extended a small box which he had under his arm.

"But surely, Martin, the boss didn't send this for you!"

"No, sir, I'm takin' hit to de village, de boss he sent hit. . . . But I t'ink I should know how hit's employed."

Heath volunteered to show him how. For half an hour, as Martin knelt in all his splendor beside the coffee table, the mysteries of this gift were explained. At first we couldn't believe, then as we watched him, more enthralled than ever before in his life, we knew we had

suddenly learned a great deal about Martin. It is doubtful if Todd Solomon, who was to get the present, ever saw those bright pieces of steel, those fascinating bolts and nuts which made such wonderful steam shovels and carts and derricks out of this beginners' Mecanno set.

They were nothing but children, no question about it. We sat talking about them on that warm Christmas afternoon; about what they were now, and what they had once been as slaves. The dance the night before had set us wondering about the past.

Was Tobago so very different then? We had one clue in the form of a rare book which our friend Agnes Rother had just brought us from Port-of-Spain. It was an exact reprint of the Anglican Church *Register* in Tobago for the latter part of the eighteenth century. Jeff began reading some of the curious items. Finally she laid the book down.

"The blacks," she mused, "obviously haven't changed much since the days of slavery. And the emancipation doesn't seem to have really improved their initiative a great deal. But the planters then—"

"Apparently they haven't changed either. They still have their big estates, and they're waited on hand and foot, we've seen that. Do you realize that today there are a hundred and fifty blacks for every white man or woman or child on this island? Twenty-five thousand descendants of those slaves to a handful of masters. The figures—"

"Statistics can't explain it all. I heard just a few things last night—you've no idea what luxury they lived in! Mr. Hamilton told me he'd lend us an old history of Tobago. He said there were some very surprising things about the island. . . . And someone told me an

interesting phrase that was popular in London in the old days—"Wealthy as a Tobago planter." Can you imagine? This little island! It just proves . . ."

At Merchiston Estate, in a spot where the bush has grown thick about an avenue of stately palmettos, lies an old grave upon whose slab has been carved the tragic tale of the young heir who "rode to Scarborough Town to a dance, caught a chill and died the following night."

Bacolet Estate house, on the outskirts of Scarborough, resounded to the strains of music. The great main room was decorated with green shoots of bamboo, and the scarlet of hibiscus and poinsettia; balloons hung from the rafters. A few of the guests were already dancing. Officials of the island in evening clothes, and their wives in long, sweeping gowns, were talking with the planters. White-coated black boys and starched maids circulated among them with trays of rum punches and whiskies. Everyone was in rare good humor, for it was Christmas Eve. There was a fir tree in one corner of the room, hung with shining ornaments and candles; children's presents lay beneath the branches of this, the only analogy to the northern holiday these people had once known.

A young man from Merchiston came in, was greeted, and a punch placed in his hand. . . .

But he and the young one beneath the slab were separated by nearly two centuries. And this dance at Bacolet was only the night before, when we had been introduced to the island society.

Even as we danced to a twentieth century phonograph, under electric lights again for the first time since we had settled at Terry Hill, even as the telephone rang

and reminded us that this was today—in brief moments, in an idle phrase, we caught something, perhaps only a sorry remnant, of the past.

There were visitors now, residents for the winter like ourselves, or tourists who were staying for the week end; but in the old days there were guests, too. Perhaps not exactly like the stout boy from Philadelphia who asked the black maid Carmen for his dinner; instead, he received beer, and resigned himself to that diet for the rest of the evening. But very likely there had been good hearty Britishers, going about buying drinks and uttering that characteristic toast, "*Ex-traxo-d'n'ry* good luck!" And, too, there must have been ladies who looked like dowagers, and matrons who put on formality with their gowns. Breeches and ruffles, of course, were replaced last night with white mess jackets and black trousers; but many of the men must have perspired just as these unfortunate ones who had honored the occasion by dressing in hot black serge instead of their usual whites. At a glance, there seemed something indestructible about the British in the tropics. Carrying on the tradition, we thought; perhaps we had read too many suave English writers.

Yet they still had that imperious way with the blacks, as if they were slaves even now. It was the American tourist, they said, who was preyed upon by such a one as Lytton. Lytton was at the moment bringing more punches to us as we cooled off on the gallery. Upon occasion, however, he is a Boy Scout, because in his khaki shorts and campaign hat he is admitted on the visiting warships and can stand guard on Coronation Day. Scouts, he has found, are highly respected in the States. The dear old lady who thought his attentions had been

nourished by that noble tradition had asked him if he wouldn't like one or two items of equipment; she would send it to him from home. Lytton, who had been stealing his employer's time to serve this susceptible lady in the hope of a generous tip, saw an even bigger opportunity. Someday he hoped to be a chauffeur and be above most of his race; failing that eventuality now, he could become better equipped than his Scout master. Pouring over his handbook, he selected every item listed. The knife and torch would be useful; the semaphore flags would be fun to carry in parades—it was wonderful! He gave the old lady the list and she lived up to her promise; everything he wanted, the dear boy, was shipped from the States. And he was prompted to try the same trick again after his boss paid the sizable customs duty. . . .

We found Guy and Deb, and they began introducing us about. Everyone there was politely surprised that we enjoyed being at Terry Hill. "Oh, but of course," they said over and over. "It is a marvelous place for you two. Yes, an ideal spot for writing. Yes." We nodded at their platitude, knowing that not one of them would have wanted to be isolated there, even with a car. For this was the island society, the ones who left their estates to join the visitors at golf or tennis, and rums until dark. There were the Trinidadians, too, who had belatedly discovered their own island ward after years of snubbing its beauties: the officious young men, being very British, and the single young ladies, who had come on a fishing holiday—the catches might be easier where there was less competition than in Port-of-Spain. There were the older men who sent their partners dizzily whirling about the waxed floor, attempting to live up to their reputations,

whispered behind hands, as twentieth century rakehells. There were the tables of bridge on the cool gallery, reminiscent of any country-club dance at home.

It was a small-town atmosphere: how could it be otherwise, with less than two hundred white people upon the island? But it was also the British West Indies, it was a colony of the Crown, part of the great Empire. They spoke of "home," whether they had not seen it for years or never at all, being born here.

That it was British was evident enough from the Negro orchestra which finally arrived. A sorrier attempt at jazz has seldom been rendered. With nostalgia we recalled even the obscure roadhouse musicians at home, who could do wonders with a three-piece band such as this one. The songs were familiar, but played with all the logic and utter lack of rhythm of a player piano. These blacks had been dampened by the British; their inborn gaiety and style had been destroyed.

It was the same way with the choristers. We had been told that several groups of Negroes would come around to sing carols. At least this traditional custom, we thought, might convince us that the calendar was not lying. And we visualized them being sung rather in the manner of our own southern spirituals.

Finally the first chorus appeared, a mixture of boys and girls, all starched and every head covered against the dew, seriously clutching candles in one hand and hymn-books in the other. As they began to sing the whole party gathered on the gallery. Still, the balmy night belied the season, and it was hard to remember that up north, other groups were trudging through the snow doing this very same thing. Singing before windows, however, decorated with holly wreaths, their breath making little

white clouds in the night. And the stars shone there not with a warm and twinkling light but cold and blue through the freezing air.

The "carols" did not cause this disparity to vanish. They were not the favorite old tunes at all, none of the ones which had always made us think of English manors, of good King Wenceslaus and bringing in the Yule log, and the roast boar with a bright apple in its mouth. These were uninspired hymns, no more, which dragged through interminable stanzas. At last one of the guests, evidently remembering his own quite different childhood days, began leading us in *Silent Night*. Yet that, too, seemed out of place, like singing it on a summer's evening.

Word had spread about the town that the white folks were having a dance and were making free with shillings. And the planters began to be preyed on, just like the dear old lady and the Boy Scout. Choirs began appearing from every church—the Moravians and the Catholics, the Methodists and Anglicans and Seventh Day Adventists, and for all we knew, even the Plymouth Brethren.

But to our ears the best was a ragged group of black men who had designated themselves the Government House Band—meaning that they lived within earshot of that now usually deserted residence. Three or four of them strummed their guitars while one lone man in the background played a contrapuntal melody on his flute. It sounded weird and pagan, but more full of life and rejoicing than those sober choristers, or even our dance orchestra, who exuded more righteousness than rhythm.

Curiously, the tunes they played and the instruments

they used were exactly like those for the Brazilian maxixe and the samba, both Negro-inspired.

We mentioned this to a sympathetic guest who had already remarked about the other bad music.

He snorted. "Strange, you know. I wonder if maxixe hasn't something to do with what they used to call here the mestize?"

We remembered entries in the Anglican *Register*. A mestize was the offspring of a Negress and a white man.

"And samba. You have the expression Black Sambo in the States. Down here, a sambo was the son of a nigger and a mulatto—not pure black at all."

"A lot of the blood must have been mixed in," we prompted him. Among this island society here we had seen suspicious signs.

"Mixed?" He laughed. "Just look around you tonight."

But, we suggested, it made no difference. That might be hard to convince people up north in our so-called democracy, but here it was certainly of no moment. Not even from the things we had heard whispered by more than one person; from the rumors, the gossip.

"Well, perhaps it doesn't matter. If we're free of the taint ourselves, we may think it does. But it's history, man. This little island has more than one strange quirk. . . ."





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II

*From Robinson Crusoe*

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## *Gateway to El Dorado*

ALTHOUGH by this time we had our bearings, and understood a little of the island's beginnings, a great deal lay still undiscovered. At first the intimations were slight. People dropped a few casual and tantalizing hints, as at the Christmas Eve dance. And slowly, as we saw more and read more, a picture began to take shape. . . .

Once, we waded through the thick grass which grew at the feet of a neglected grove of palms. As we came to the end of the point of land, where the ocean quietly licked at the sandy shore, we stumbled upon a half-buried circle of masonry. Scuffling in the brush, we uncovered an old iron musket ball. It was exciting to find this confirmation in Battery Point, which overlooked Great Courland Bay. One of the residents told us a strange thing about that bay. It was named for the lord of an obscure duchy on the Baltic, who founded one of the first settlements on Tobago.

On the far side lay Plymouth, where we had already seen that better-preserved battery, with its rusty old cannon still uselessly guarding a harbor that had once seen French and Dutch and English men-o'-war. That last term reminded us of the other great bay at Charlotteville, host to many a historical flotilla. Yet we didn't have to look that far from Terry Hill. Below us, near

the village of Mount St. George, were more old cannon; the coat of arms of George III was still barely discernible. And at Studley Park the first assembly of Tobago had once met.

Even if we stayed at home, this old *Register* of the Anglican Church and Woodcock's *History of Tobago* would bring us closer to the past.

Before we had sailed for the West Indies we heard that Tobago was the locale of Daniel Defoe's famous tale. We were a trifle skeptical: most people believed that the account was based on the shipwreck adventures of Alexander Selkirk upon Juan Fernández, an island in the Pacific off Chile. But just for fun, we had brought along our childhood copy of *Robinson Crusoe*. Since then we have learned that the adventures were indeed largely Selkirk's, but that the title page of the original edition of 1719 described Crusoe's island as being at "the mouth of the mighty Oroonoka [Orinoco], 30 miles N. of Trinidad, an island lying just in the Caribbean archipelago." Now we began to read, for Crusoe was here long before those forts were built. Presently we came to this, the description of his famous man Friday:

"He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made . . . a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect. . . . His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead was very high, and large. . . . The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny . . . of a dun olive colour. . . . His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat like a negroes, a very good mouth, thin lips, his fine teeth well set, and white as

ivory. . . . I asked him the names of the several nations of his sort of people, but could get no other name than Caribs; from whence I easily understood that these were the Caribbees."

And so, along with this portrait of the earliest inhabitants of the West Indies, is exploded the usage which calls a Negro servant Man Friday.

As we looked upon a map of the Antilles and saw Tobago, one of the smaller dots, it was not too difficult to imagine the origin of the island as a separate entity. Upward of a million years ago the mountains which formed a link between Florida and South America were gradually submerged in the sea, so that the waters flowed through each valley, leaving only a disconnected chain of green, tropical peaks. That was the real birth, the beginning. Yet we preferred to jump ahead whole eons of time, to the first inhabitants, which the early historiographers called "Charaibs." For these brown Indians, coming across from the continent of South America in their piraguas, linked prehistoric Tobago with the days of Columbus.

He saw them first, of course, and likewise discovered Tobago for the world at large. On his third voyage, proceeding from Grenada to Trinidad, which he sighted on the last day of July, 1498, he spied our hills in the distance. Some authorities say he named it Assumption, for that holy day was only a fortnight later. The more usual legend is that he humorously named it "Tabago" because the island's shape resembled a tubical instrument, so called by the Caribs, and with which they inhaled the fumes of tobacco—*tabaco*, as the Spaniards spelled it.

Immediately Tobago appeared on those old, highly decorated parchment maps which we admire so much today. It was part of the new, western Indies, which would have to do for Spain in place of the Spice Islands and Java and Borneo. The northern islands of Cuba, Jamaica and Santo Domingo became the Greater Antilles, and Tobago with all its sisters from the northernmost Virgins to Trinidad, the Lesser Antilles, after that legendary land which early map makers had placed somewhere west of the Azores.

Thus Tobago was not only put on the map but became part of history. And then, just as abruptly, it dropped from view for over a hundred years. No one is even sure that the British flag was first planted on its shores in 1580.

But a good deal is known of these Caribs, who may have lived permanently in Tobago or simply have visited here after war and conquests, as Friday's people were supposed to have done, to engage in cannibalistic feasts and wild dancing upon the shores.

If they were not the noble savage of romantic tradition, neither were they half so primitive as you might think. They had long before dominated the weaker Arawak tribes. Their villages "resembled a European encampment; for their cabins were built of poles fixed circularly in the ground, and drawn to a point at the top. They were then covered with leaves of the palm tree. In the center of each village . . . a building of superior magnitude than the rest . . . served as a publick hall" where men and women ate in common, according to the Earl of Cumberland, who visited such a settlement not ten years after Columbus. In this climate they needed no clothes, and decorated themselves with gold ornaments,

which the Spaniards eyed greedily. They fashioned baskets and clay pottery; they wove cloth from cotton. And they ate, besides wild fowl and the like, maize, which they cultivated, yams and all the tropical fruits. Yet, like the ancient Hebrews, they eschewed the pork of the wild peccary that roamed the mountain forests—a very sensible omission in the tropics. Like the Mayans and Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of Peru, they owned and tilled their farms communally.

All the early writers agree upon their warlike appearance, which was not so much purely savage and ferocious as stalwart and indomitable. In those first decades of Spanish conquest, they were frequently massacred, but never humbled, and the *conquistadores* early learned they were dangerous. Gradually their numbers lessened as they were driven from one island to another, so that today only in a few isolated spots like one section of Dominica are there any at all. But three families of them remained in Tobago as recently as 1792, on Louis d'or estate. According to Sir William Young, who was visiting his plantation, the chief, Louis, was only five years old when his family fled from the persecutions of the Africans or black Caribs of St. Vincent. Black Indians are now and again mentioned by other writers, but the adjective should not be taken too literally. True enough, an early governor of Bermuda had bred an Indian with a Negro slave to produce an original type which is still seen on St. David's Island; but there is probably little truth about most "black" Indians, for the red Caribs were an aloof race, and looked down upon the slaves.

Two of the young Indian women, Sir William reported, were really handsome. However, "the old Indian dress is lost, and they wore handkerchiefs, cotton



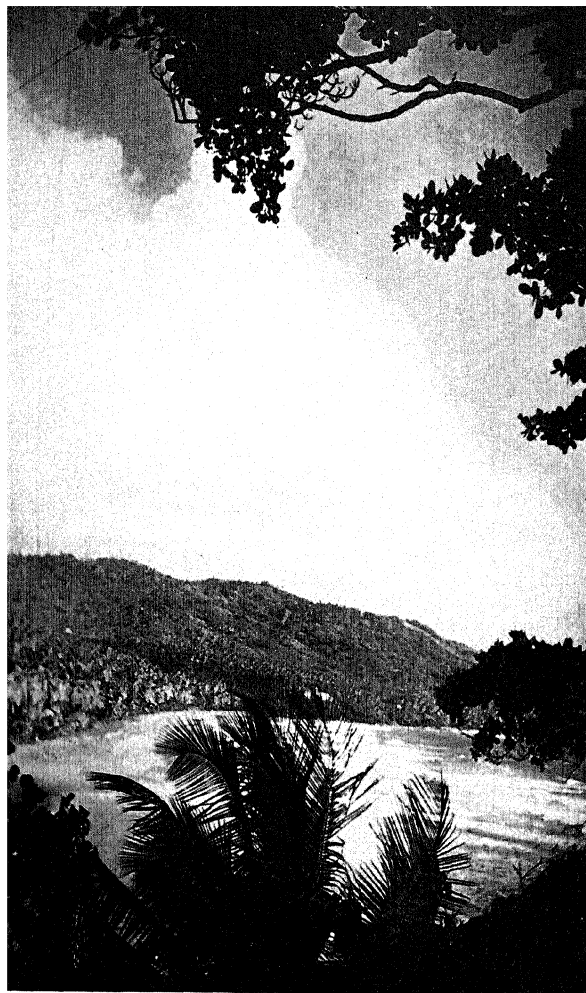
petticoats and jackets like the negroes. The huts were scarcely watertight, being wattled and thatched, crowded with their filth and all their wealth; the latter consisting of a great variety of nets for fishing, hammocks for sleeping in, and different sorts of provisions, stores, &c., &c. Beasts, stores and people all in one room."

The visitor acquired a few words of Carib, which Chief Louis translated into French for him. He was a Catholic, but reminded his master that the Caribs had always believed in a future state, just as Friday had told Crusoe. Formerly, he went on to say, they buried their dead in a sitting position, with bows and arrows by their side. But now they buried them *au long et droit*, which was better, for they could now start up and fly to heaven easily and directly when called.

But few of them succumbed in the early days to the Spanish Church padres, a dubious fate which ensnared the Mexican and South American Indians. For the Caribs were islanders, with the same independence and stubbornness as the likewise insular British. Together with the Spanish, this proud red race helped keep Tobago clear of other foreign nations, who were eager to prey on the new world Spain had found.

If Tobago was later to be so ruthlessly sought after, why was the island neglected for more than a century? History gives a plain answer, summed up in one phrase: the search for GOLD.

This was the great, colorful century of swashbuckling and raids in beautiful galleons, when the names of Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake and then Walter Raleigh were on all tongues; when Europe looked enviously to the west, to the Spanish Main. A generation after Columbus had made his voyages, Peru had been



The King's cannon still looks down upon Hope Bay.



*Courtesy Deborah Currier*

“The donkeys are like bishops.”



Women build bridges.

conquered upon the opposite coast of South America, and the tales began of El Dorado—The Gilded Man, or the Golden Kingdom. The Caribbean Isles offered nothing of this, and hence were neglected; not Tobago alone, but all of them. GOLD! these tough freebooters roared, and they had blood in their eyes. To hell with everything else, they swore, and cut their own partners' throats over the spoils. It was a time that is more romantic from this nearly safe and civilized century. Hardbitten and frequently escaping from their crimes at home, these adventurers sailed west till their faces were brown with salt spray and wind and a blistering tropical sun, starved by bad food and short rations of stagnant water because of the long voyages, paid to fight for their royal majesties but looking out primarily for themselves. When their eyes first sighted land at last, they weren't hanging over the rails, gasping at the green beauty of those virgin mountains, rising out of an aquamarine sea. They were already imagining GOLD, and their eyes were trained to catch the crenelations of a Spanish fortress, which surrounded a treasure house.

For Spain was having her own way; it was the Spanish Main in more than title. These were her isles, which served as outposts to the golden continent, and as storehouses, before the wealth was transshipped home. The islands seemed to them good for nothing else. For nearly three hundred years, France and England and the Netherlands tried to break that firm Spanish grip. After the first great madness, frenzied and ruthless as ever the Spaniards' own conquests of this enormous area, these rival countries thought of settlements only as a foothold, as a wedge to greater wealth, and as stations for forts, for refueling their raiders' ships.

For this gigantic and lengthy conflict, the Caribbean and its isles became the setting.

Roger Barlow of England was among the first to attack. His scheme was to reach Peru by way of the Amazon. He knew not whereof he spoke, but if he had succeeded, this great, untamable river might instead have become the battleground. But the Spaniards laughed up their ruffled sleeves, and they beat Hawkins and Drake unmercifully. It was a mere threat to them, but a terrifying precedent, when Drake, the first Englishman to accomplish this feat, sailed his famous *Golden Hind* through the Straits of Magellan and captured a great treasure ship in the Pacific. A few years later, however, when he captured Cartagena, near the Isthmus of Panama in what is now northern Colombia, he finished his raid with a handful of men and was forced to ask ransoms to pay his own sailors. On the way home he picked up Raleigh's discouraged settlers in Virginia. Embittered, fighting mad, he defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, that red-letter date in English naval history.

Yet Spain was far from subdued; her hold was no whit lessened in America.

The piracies continued, but England had found, along with her continued freebooting, a more peaceful way of acquiring Spanish gold. Spain needed laborers to work her mines. The Portuguese had begun capturing Africans before Columbus discovered America, but the monopoly to provide Spanish possessions with black men was first given to a Flemish courtier, then to Genoese merchants, and finally back to the Portuguese. But there was such a thing as circumventing the monopoly, and the Spaniards in the New World readily connived,

even though they hated England as a nation. Hawkins and Drake began smuggling this black cargo, and soon the Dutch were in the game, too. Half a century later, because he had set out to the Guinea coast on just such a mission, Robinson Crusoe was to be shipwrecked upon Tobago.

This was too slow a business for the greater spirits of the time. Spain had perhaps made a mistake by not allowing England and the other countries to trade with her colonies; yet Philip knew that once the monopoly was broken, he would have no peace. And the Church wanted an equally tight monopoly on the souls of conquered peoples. Elizabeth, who had been ex-communicated long before the defeat of the Armada and nearly assassinated by the aid of Philip, encouraged further raids upon Spanish territories.

The island nearest to the golden continent of South America was Trinidad, neighbor of Tobago. All ships would naturally steer through the Dragon's Mouths, those northern bocas of the Gulf of Paria, where the mountains of island and mainland almost touch, and sail out again at the equally narrow Serpent's Mouth, proceeding down the coast to Guiana. For in Guiana, so the rumors said, was El Dorado, the Kingdom of Gold. Therefore, the Spaniards had settled Trinidad as early as 1532. That it was a mean settlement at first, and that our friends the Caribs outnumbered their conquerors is evident from the Indian names which still denote districts on that island: Arima, Cunupia, Chagunas, Guayaguayare, Charuma and Caroni are all from the Carib language.

Sixty years later, in 1592, a better post was established by a curious chain of events, which not only perfectly

typified the epoch, but probably brought about the first visitation of white men to Tobago.

It started with the curious testament of an old Spaniard, who had acquired great wealth and property in New Granada, in the mountains near what is now Bogotá, Colombia. By his will a niece inherited these vast possessions, and her husband, Don Antonio de Berrio, was entrusted with the strange request to continue the old man's search for El Dorado, which he believed to be somewhere in the upper reaches of the Orinoco river. Although an old man himself, Don Antonio accepted, and began a series of explorations which then were a hundred times more perilous than those attempted today in the same wild region. Finally he came upon a great tributary, and there learned heartening news about his quest. Old Berrio proceeded to the mouth of the river in the Atlantic, and on his way home stopped for several months on an island northwest of Trinidad, doubtless to recuperate after his long expedition. While he was there a strange creature arrived in Indian feathers, but with a Spanish tongue; he had lived among the Indians as a chief, and boasted of knowing the location of El Dorado. His stories grew better as they prodded him with wine, and confirmed the ones Berrio had heard, so that he decided to make a base for further exploration at some point near the delta of the Orinoco. The logical spot was Trinidad.

Therefore, San José de Oruña was founded, the present-day St. Joseph which now lies above Port-of-Spain—founded not as a merchant city, but as a base for a fantastic expedition to find gold.

Berrio had picked a position on a height and inland because el Puerto de los Hispañoles, Port-of-Spain, was open to piratical raids. There he waited for reinforce-

ments and another grant from his king; he was already Governor of El Dorado, wherever that was. And while waiting, he was attacked in what he had thought an impregnable position by no less a figure than Sir Walter Raleigh. By another crazy chain of circumstances, an English sea captain had captured a Spanish galleon that was carrying a letter containing Berrio's enthusiastic account; and this letter the captain turned over to Raleigh. That worthy, in disfavor with Elizabeth, yet better informed than most of the corsairs, saw here a magnificent chance. He burned San José to the ground and made the island his own base. It is amusing to read the various accounts, which try to prove either Raleigh or Berrio the greater gentleman. But both of them were equally mad with desire for this Golden Kingdom. If the Englishman had only known it, he had stumbled upon a greater fortune in the southern part of Trinidad, where he closed the seams of his vessels with pitch from the great lake.

The tale ended tragically for both adventurers. Raleigh grew discouraged with futile searching and sailed north again, while Berrio died at a little fever-infested settlement up the Orinoco, still seeking, seeking. . . .

Just a month before Raleigh arrived at Port-of-Spain, a young blood by the name of Robert Dudley had been in Trinidad. His father was none other than the Earl of Leicester, once the prospective consort of Elizabeth. Young Robert believed he had found gold. So delighted was he that he decided to wait for Raleigh; but finally he gave up hope of seeing his friend, and sailed away with his specimens of iron pyrite. At that very moment Raleigh was standing off to reconnoiter the island, keeping out of sight of the Spanish.

If the two had met, Dudley might have been disil-



lusioned by his more experienced fellow countryman, and would not have stopped at Tobago in the hope of finding still more gold. There is no record that he discovered so much as a sparkling rock; but by setting foot upon our island, he gave England her first claim.

The British tactics were slowly undergoing a change. Raiding had not been altogether successful for them or the French or Dutch. Although they probably did not know the exact figures, they would not have been surprised to learn that in the very year Raleigh and Dudley went to Trinidad, the Spanish shipped home seven million pesos from the Americas. In one hundred and fifty years, almost that many millions were presented to the crown, and *twice* that amount to private persons.

England decided it was high time that she got in on the real spoils.

## *Enter the Dutch*

FROM now on Tobago enters decidedly into the historical picture. In the next eighty years, the little island changed hands twenty times, on an average of once every four years—and that was not the end. Its woods and shores echoed to half a dozen languages. If the raids conducted by those old Elizabethan corsairs were bloody, the struggle for permanent possessions in the New World was far more so.

James I, who succeeded Elizabeth at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was more friendly with the Spanish. He immediately negotiated an important treaty allowing England to settle in parts of Spanish America which were not “effectively occupied.” In other words, the old monopoly was broken, provided England could conquer any islands that had little or no Spanish fortifications and garrisons.

But the dream of El Dorado persisted for another twenty years. Sir Walter Raleigh made a last, wistful trip to the Orinoco, and a grant was given to “The Governor and Company of Noblemen and Gentlemen of the City of London, Adventures in and about the River of the Amazons.” The islands were still looked upon as watering stations and bases, just as Raleigh had used Trinidad.

Then, in the 1620's, everything happened with a rush.

This, of course, was the date of that bulging ship, the *Mayflower*, and the landing of the Pilgrims. At the same moment the Dutch formed their West India Company, and shortly after acquired all the islands which they still own. In quick succession, the French followed suit. But the English were slower, and less decided, with the result that their settlements were in constant danger from the other nations.

Their first colony was the lovely island of St. Christopher, or St. Kitts, which the Caribs called Liamuiga, the Fertile Island. But not only was it smaller than Tobago; it was shared by the French. Together they staved off attacks by the Caribs, just as their countrymen had to do against the Indians of North America. The Caribs furnished the reason for Spain's not having effectively occupied the island. Besides, the Spaniards were not interested in planting. And at heart, despite the adventurers among them, the English were solid men of the soil, who liked to build homes and stay put.

This did not prevent them from venturing afield; but Trinidad was the wrong island to pick as the next acquisition. The year before they had tried Tobago. A party of Englishmen, coming on from Barbados, landed magnificently with guns and a reverend father from Exeter College, Oxford, as chaplain. They needed him by the time the Indians finished them off. Even the chaplain had to take to the sea, clerical garb and all, and swim for his life.

At least, this gave England a sound claim to the island. Charles I now began handing out patents and palatine grants. The mighty Earl of Cumberland, who had seen reports of these fertile isles, persuaded the king to make him lord protector of the Caribbees. But Tobago itself

featured in a deal with an Anglo-Dutch firm which was the prototype of a powerful modern company with the same racial combination. This firm shrewdly enlisted the aid of the influential Earl of Pembroke, who received a palatine grant that included not only Tobago and Barbados, which already was held by Carlisle, but Spanish Trinidad, and best joke of all, Fonseca, an island that was thought to lie some three hundred miles east of the Antilles. Fonseca was simply not to be found. That such an island might not have been pure fiction is corroborated by what may have been a similar instance in this century: in 1911, off the coast of Trinidad, heavy smoke and fire issued from the sea; when this cleared away a new island was found, which was duly claimed for England. But in a few years it submerged again, only to reappear in 1928.

Despite all these English grants, the next people to visit Tobago, fully determined to settle, were Flemish. In 1632, two hundred stolid persons from Flessingen landed in Tobago, and promptly renamed it Nieuw Walcheren. Finding no inhabitants, they joyfully and innocently began building houses—or first, probably a fort—from the plenteous timber they found. No one knows whether it was a matter of weeks or months before the Spanish in Trinidad heard of this new threat to the mouth of the “Oroonoka,” as it is called in the old histories. To destroy this colony they enlisted the Caribs, who were glad enough to revenge themselves on any white men of whatever nation; and those Flemings who were not killed forsook the island.

For forty years thereafter, we hear of the Duke of Courland, who gave his name to that great bay on the northern side of the island, below Plymouth. You will

not find the duchy of Courland on a modern map, as it is today part of Latvia and Lithuania. We have often wondered how the Duke happened to pick Tobago; evidently he was on good terms with the British. He must have been a man of some character, which was reflected in his colonists, who were the first to make a go of settlement, exactly one hundred and forty-four years after Columbus sighted the island. At the outset, the one and only historian of Tobago tells us, the locality was found unhealthful for the new arrivals, "but by degrees, as the land was cleared, the noxious vapors fatal to human life were no longer engendered, and great progress was made in the . . . cultivation of the soil." This one vague sentence gives no real picture of that collection of Slav houses which hugged the bay. What did these northern men, used to having their Baltic frozen over so many months of the year, think of the warm and placid Caribbean? The only thing we do know is that about this time maps of the islands show camels being used as beasts of burden. Although common sense says that the cartographers must have been using their imaginations, and that Tobago's topography was totally unsuited for the animals, there they are on the maps, and the legend persists even today.

Ten years later the Slavs acquired neighbors, this time again the Dutch, from Flushing, and the two colonies, on opposite sides of the island, lived in peace for a few years. But as soon as they learned that the Duke had been taken prisoner in Sweden, the Hollanders attacked the other garrison, which was in a state of mutiny; evidently all was not too well with the Courlanders. They were subjugated to the Dutch until such time as the Duke would be freed.

The French, seeing that everyone else was annexing Tobago on paper or in fact, then put in their word. Like the English, some of their countrymen had set foot upon the island, and that is about all; for these particular men were fleeing from the mainland, where their settlement had dismally failed. This was about the year 1660, which was an important date for Europe and consequently for the Spanish Main and its isles.

Meanwhile, in England you will remember that Oliver Cromwell had become lord protector two decades before, thus culminating the struggle over Protestantism. And this had a more direct bearing on Tobago than you may suppose. The eminent Puritan looked quite as greedily upon the Caribbean as his royal predecessors, and his followers fixed their aim upon the rich island of Santo Domingo, where, however, the Spanish routed them, and they had to be content with the smaller island of Jamaica. The French Huguenots, Puritans and Protestants, too, were of this period, but neither they nor Cromwell's men brought much charity and righteousness to their new colonial acquisitions. Yet they were the forefathers of the present hard-working planters in that, once they had fought their bloody battles, they settled down to establishing real colonies.

For twenty-eight years, according to a very well-known authority, there was just such a pious, hard-working character on Tobago. Anyone who clearly remembers his childhood reading will recall being bored to distraction by the long homilies of that bearded gentleman, in a goatskin cap and shaggy breeches, called Robinson Crusoe. From 1659 to 1686 he held sway on our island.

It is unfortunate that Defoe marooned him there at

this particular epoch, when there was not only a Dutch and Slavic colony, but numerous French and English callers, as we'll presently see. But we will grant poetic license to an author who had never been near the West Indies. Considering that fact, Defoe did a remarkably convincing job, and no wonder his fiction was taken for truth. Only occasionally does he make a bad slip, as when he casually mentions penguins, and his indecision about which side of the island commands a view of Trinidad. This confusion, which seems to concern every writer about Tobago, was either a series of printer's errors, or a studied contradiction on Defoe's part, so that his island could not be placed on the map. It is doubtful, too, whether goats are native to the island, but that is not so bad as having Crusoe wear their skins. Often we have come up our road, melting in the sun, and remarked on his ill-suited clothes.

But Robinson would never have gone naked, or even moved about on his desert island in only a pair of linen drawers, which would have been more comfortable. For he was, or became while on the island, a good Puritan; and his first duty upon finding Friday after a quarter of a century of loneliness was to instruct him in the ways of Christianity. As Commander Alford says, the book is a great tract for missionaries. With the exception of the good chaplain from Oxford, Crusoe was the first of his kind to reach Tobago. Like a stalwart Christian, he drank sparingly of his rum, thanked God for leaving him tools and everything else under the sun; and he husbanded his crops well.

At the time when Robinson was getting comfortably settled, and deciding that as he had lived on the island for eight years, he might be forced to live here eighty,

the Caribbean was far from the half-deserted spot he pictures. For in this year the French, English and Dutch were dividing the spoils. Spain had at last lost hold, although she was not to be completely vanquished for two more centuries. Among other things, by treaty England gained New York and all of St. Kitts from the Dutch and French, while the latter acquired Acadia, later the home of Longfellow's *Evangeline*. What was still more important was that piracy was at last outlawed, and settlements might exist in relative peace.

Not that the buccaneers vanished; rather, this was the beginning of their heyday. In the earlier period had been corsairs like Hawkins and Drake and Raleigh and extraordinary Guillaume le Testu and many another, but now came Henry Morgan and his Brethren of Sea Rovers, leading up to the fellows who thrilled you as a child—Teach, Kidd, Blackbeard and Bluebeard.

The nations were no better than these pirates. Meanwhile, the head of the Dutch firm who had sent out colonizers to our island had procured a grant from Louis XIV of France, creating him Baron of Tobago. The Duke of Courland, however, was freed from Sweden, and took his demands for restitution of the island to England. Charles II agreed to an expedition, on the condition that the island would be inhabited only by British or Courlanders, and presently four sail of vessels were fitted out at the expense of some private adventurers, who easily took the garrison of a hundred and fifty men. The Dutch Baron of Tobago was no more, and the British flag waved over the little fort where a handful of men kept watch on Courland Bay.

Once more this was a mere incident in Tobago's polyglot youth. For the French commandant at Grenada



boldly determined to take the island with twenty-five volunteers.

Defoe must have read this account, for it is of the same order as an incident toward the close of his book, when Crusoe and Friday and the captain of a ship that had come to maroon its officers vanquished the whole crew of mutinying sailors. The French, however, attacked from the sea. Shrewdly, they stood off and arrived under cover of darkness. At daybreak their drummer woke the English garrison with a horrendous noise, as if he were summoning a whole regiment to arms and attack. The rest was easy. Under a flag of truce the drummer met the commander of the army and taking him to a hill where, he cheerfully lied, the whole French fleet could be observed, suddenly put aside his drum and confronted the Englishman with his musket and the terms of surrender. This nameless valiant then forced the commander to order his garrison to stack their arms in a corner, and the French flag for the first time waved over Tobago. This was a partial revenge for the victory, in which Bloody Bay acquired its name, that a British admiral had won over the combined French and Dutch fleets, in rendezvous there the year before.

The records of these years are, to say the least, incomplete, for the next thing we know the French set fire to everything and abandoned the island. It so happened that at this very time Milton was writing his *Paradise Lost*!

But the Dutch soon came back and attempted to resume their peaceful colonizing.

"Humpf!" said the British, and sent Sir Tobias Bridges, who took away four hundred prisoners, and as

many Negroes. This is the first time that slaves have been mentioned on Tobago, but no doubt from the first settlement they were there in great numbers; twenty-five thousand blacks were annually streaming into the British colonies alone. It was not until 1713 that England was favored with the famous Asiento, or monopoly, to furnish all slaves to Spanish America.

Apparently undaunted, and with their traditional stubbornness, what was left of the Dutch colony persisted in their efforts to cultivate the land. This time they had four years of peace.

And this time it was the French who harassed them. The Dutch and French fleets, which eleven years before had ganged on the British, now turned upon each other, and Count d'Estrees, who had just reduced the Dutch settlement at Cayenne, had it out with Herr Binkes. This was one of the bloodiest battles Tobago has ever seen; although where it took place, it is impossible to say: Palmit Bay and the fortress of Sterrhans are today lost names. Nearly four hundred Frenchmen were killed or wounded and the flagship *Gloriem*, of seventy guns, was blown to bits. Count d'Estrees sheepishly retired to Brest.

That December he was back again, with "twenty sail of vessels of war," besides many small craft, and fifteen hundred men. The Count was determined to avenge his defeat. On the third day his troops succeeded in blowing up the powder magazine, killing Herr Binkes and all his officers; the prisoners of war were sent to France. These battles, of course, were concomitant with the pyrotechnics of Europe, where nations aligned, broke and realigned themselves with various neighbors. Louis XIV caused

a medal to be struck to commemorate this great Tobago victory, yet the Count, unmindful of the value of fortress, defenses, houses and plantations, laid the inhabited part of the island waste once more, and abandoned the prize for which they had been so eagerly contending.

However, by a new treaty soon after, the French, having done all the damage they could, relinquished their rights to the Dutch. Whereupon that troublesome figure, the Duke of Courland, put in his oar again. On this occasion he engaged an English merchant by the name of John Poyntz. It was the Duke's last futile attempt, for few settlers were attracted by Poyntz's glowing prospectus. Yet it is quite possible that Defoe, who soon after began writing his great book, read and was impressed with that early description, so reminiscent of real-estate enthusiasm, and yet, to those of us who have seen the island, quite true:

“Thou art here presented with the Present Prospect of the Island of Tobago, about forty Leagues distant from Barbadoes; but far exceeding that Island, and indeed any other of the Caribee Islands, in the Fertility and Richness of the Soil, and in the Commodiousness of its Bays and Harbours; and it is no paradox to affirm, That though it lies more south, the Air is as Cool and Refreshing as Barbadoes; and yet Exempted from those affrighting and destructive Hurricanes that have been often Fatal to the rest of the Caribee Islands. . . . And I am perswaded that there is no Island in America, that can afford us more ample Subjects to contemplate the Bounty and Goodness of our Great Creator in, than this of Tobago; And this, I speak not by hearsay, or as one that has liv'd always at home; but as one that has had Experience of the World, and most

parts of the Continent of America, and almost all His Majesties Foreign Plantations; and after having view'd them all, have chosen this Island of Tobago to take up my *quietus est* in."

Upon the failure of this announcement to arouse great interest, came a respite for Tobago. By the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle it joined Dominica, St. Vincent and St. Lucia as "neutral" isles. These were the refuges to which the Caribs were supposedly assigned, so that the remnants of those who had not been slaughtered might live in peace. Actually, in the case of Tobago, the decision was made to clear the decks and relieve the island of all ancient and conflicting claims, so that France or England could grab it at a propitious moment.

For eighty-four years, however, not one word is mentioned about Tobago, save as an anchorage for ships in need of wood or water. Thus in 1684, just two years before Robinson Crusoe left the island, Tobago was actually deserted; and if Defoe had placed his hero a trifle later in the chronology, none could say him nay. But when he was writing his book, in 1718 or 1719, he might easily have learned that no one lived there, and presumed that such had been the case for centuries.

As many people in Tobago will tell you today, further justification for Crusoe's tale was established during the time the island was abandoned. In 1757, a hundred years after Crusoe took up residence, a midshipman by the name of Thomson landed from the ship *Stirling Castle* of the Royal Navy, and "having wandered into the woods in search of wild oranges, he was surprised by the discovery of a hut, the inhabitant of which, a venerable-looking man, addressed him in French, and to his aston-

ishment declared that he had resided twenty-one years in that solitary situation, having scarcely any communication with a human being. The Indians, he said, would sometimes call at his hermitage when hunting, give him part of their game, and shave his beard off with their knives; but he had never paid attention enough to their language to converse in it. He had been a priest in Martinico [Martinique], but advancing some tenet which gave offence, he was seized in the night and transported to Tobago. Offers were made to convey him to Europe, which he declined, observing that he was perfectly reconciled to his situation, and happier than he could be in any other."

*“Wealthy as  
a Tobago Planter”*

THESE battles, this fighting for the island, is all very well, you will begin to say at this point; but when was Tobago really settled? Why, its colonial history must be shorter than that of North America.

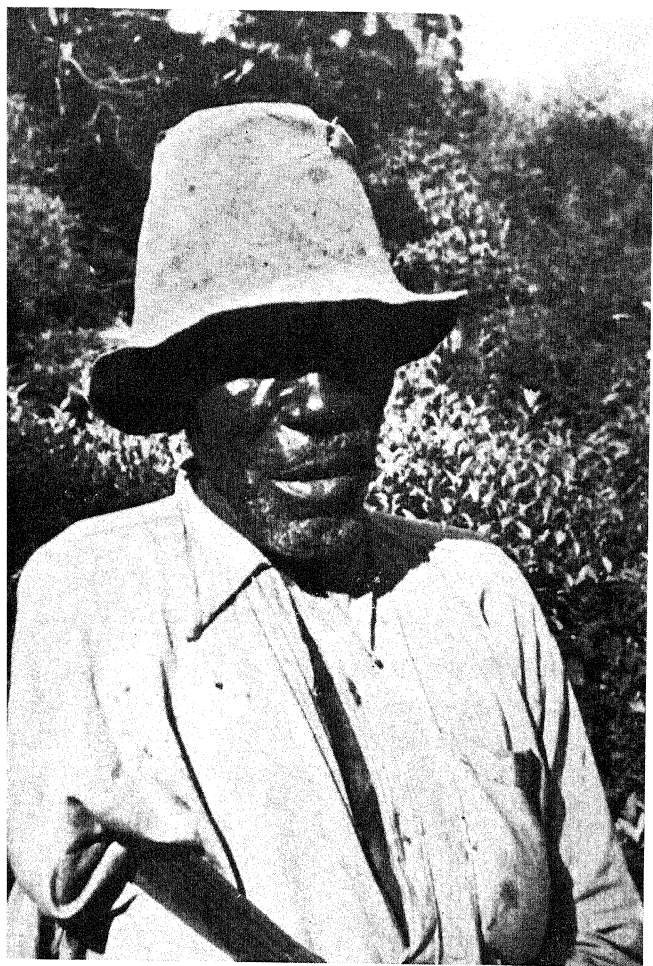
That is true. The Caribbean was so immensely valuable, and its islands, for one reason or another, such prizes, that it became a case of the dog in the manger. France would do nothing to establish a colony in Tobago, but on the other hand, she refused to allow England or the Netherlands to remain in peace—and vice versa.

France did, in the middle of the eighteenth century, implant a colony of three hundred men from Martinique. As a matter of course, the English protested, and sent a Captain Tyrell in a frigate to inquire by what right they were using England's isle. This colony must have been at or near Speyside, up windward, for the bay is still called Tyrrrel's, probably a misspelling, on our topographical map. For a wonder, the French relinquished their claim without a struggle; the nations, we decided as we read on, were becoming more civilized.

Or were they? By the time of the French and English War (of 1756—there were so many), France was once more on the island. Although in the treaty that ended the war, England was given the undisputed claim, these invasions were of a different character now: both countries definitely wanted to colonize, and derive revenue from the fertile land. With a sigh of relief, we see that this last treaty led to the foundation “of the first permanent colony that through a train of disastrous circumstances had ever been permitted to flourish” upon Tobago’s shores.

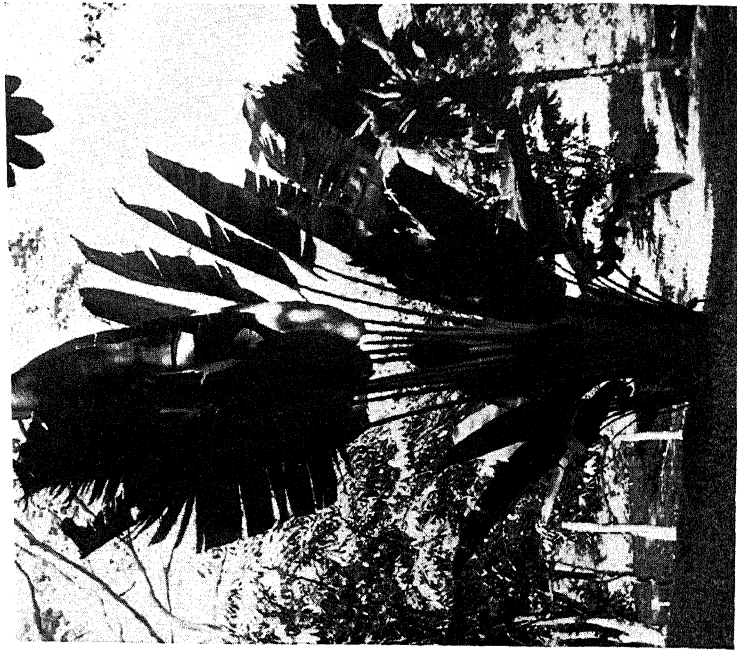
George III issued a proclamation to set his colonial house in order: four American jurisdictions were set up, to be called Quebec, East Florida, West Florida and Grenada. The Grenadines, Dominica, St. Vincent and Tobago thus formed the British West Indies. The colony was to have a governor, an appointed council and an assembly in each island, the three of which together would meet and make laws patterned after the English constitution. All inhabitants of these islands, the proclamation reads, would be treated equally; but historians differ whether there were other than a few Caribs on Tobago. Did any of the Frenchmen, or even the earlier Dutch, still exist near one of the numerous bays? There were few roads, and different sections were certainly isolated enough for several nationalities to have flourished without communication.

The whole question appears academic until we look at the grants which divided up the entire island in this year of 1763. Of the hundred or so men who bought lots, not one but boasts a good English or Scotch name: Smith and Hamilton, Gordon and Stewart, Hawkins and Ottley and Young are typical. Tobago became as Brit-



Providence is nearly old enough to remember that August day.





In the heart of the traveler's palm there is always  
water for the thirsty.



Carib Indians first ate these pawpaws.

ish as its flag, which soon was flying over Georgetown and Scarborough and other equally British-sounding names.

The island was divided into seven parishes, the idea originally being for each to have a town. Lands for fortifications, yards for the navy, and a certain amount of the woodland for preservation of the watershed on the Main Ridge, were set aside by the government. The rest of the land, except poor settlers' lots and a belt around the coast three chains in width, were sold off in parcels. In this orderly fashion, Tobago was divided into plantations, and initiated the present-day custom of considering three hundred acres the equivalent of an estate, although the lots sometimes were split at this original sale into one hundred or bunched together into five hundred acres. The price was twenty shillings (a pound sterling) an acre for uncleared land, and five pounds for cleared. Much of the hard work had already been done by those unfortunate Dutch and Courlanders, and perhaps a bit more by the French, for almost half the land sold, from the average price per acre of the whole, must have been already cleared.

At the end of Woodcock's *History of Tobago* is a table listing the original grantees, the lot numbers, the names of the estates and their purchasers. Only two or three of the original families own land here today, although there may be a few more we do not know; but the estate names are much the same. A few delightful ones have gone, swallowed up into the larger modern plantations. Cinnamon Hill is no more, nor Nutmeg Grove, Widow's Lot, Spring Garden, Montpelier, Burleigh Castle, Orange Valley, Windsor, Eden, Trois Rivières, Telescope nor Starwood. Most of the remain-

ing sixty-odd have survived the great changes which have come about during eight generations. Yet despite all these sizable estates, only half of the land was sold for cultivation.

The planter had not fulfilled his obligation when he had purchased the land; sixpence per acre additional was to cover the cost of surveying, and another sixpence for "quit rent"—a hang-over from feudal times, paid in lieu of certain services. Furthermore, for every hundred acres cleared the planter had to keep one white man or two white women, who were nothing more than indentured servants; and it was specified that the acreage must be progressively cleared, until one-half the land was tillable.

The first parcel of land, of five hundred acres, was sold early in 1766 to one James Simpson. We shall hear of this gentleman again in a very surprising connection. Indirectly, he materially affected the history of the United States and the lives of every one of us. . . .

At this point, history comes literally closer to home, for Georgetown, the first capital of Tobago, was situated where now stands Studley Park house, right below Terry Hill. In those days, it must have been very comforting to have been so near the fort at Granby Point, where not long ago a black marble tombstone still visibly proclaimed that "Beneath this Stone Lies Interr'd the Body of Mr. James Clark, Who Departed This Life the 6th July, 1772, Aged 30 Years." We have come at last to the era of which in our walks we have found so many hints.

That a magnificent house of stone was built for Tobago's first assembly and legislature, we can still see today in the ruins about our neighbor's residence. But

within a year, for some now unknown reason, the capital was removed to Scarborough.

In four years after the first planter began cultivating his land, Tobago was already making up for lost time, as if to show Europe what had been missed for nearly two whole centuries. The good ship *Dolly*, which doubtless like all the ships of the period came out with building bricks for ballast, returned to England loaded to the gunwales with hogsheads of Tobago sugar.

The island must already have looked very much like the other West Indies isles which a remarkable Scottish spinster, who drank her Madeira with the best of them, viewed during an eventful trip in this decade, on the eve of our American Revolution. Janet Schaw had sailed in the *Jamaica Packet* with her brother, who was going out to be a searcher of customs at St. Christopher, and with a few other friends, plus an unexpected cargo of Scottish immigrants who had been driven from their Highland homes. Her remarkable journal, one of the most revealing of her time and well worth your reading, was purchased by the British Museum and has been published under the title of *Journal of a Lady of Quality, Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina and Portugal, in the years 1774-1776*.<sup>\*</sup> She begins this fascinating account with her departure from the Firth of Forth, casually but pun-  
gently details the twelve-day storm that drove the ship around the north of Scotland past the Orkneys, dismasted them and ruined most of their food which they had to bring with them, and eventually describes their

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<sup>\*</sup> Edited by E. W. Andrews and C. McL. Andrews. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1927. Quotations by permission.

arrival in tropical waters, and their first landfall at Antigua.

Even before she disembarked, and was regaled by the island society with dances and teas, and food that makes our mouths water, she naturally rhapsodized over the view that confronted her after that arduous voyage:

“The beauty of the Island rises every moment as we advance towards the bay; the first plantations we observed were very high and rocky, but as we came farther on, they appeared more improved, and when we got into the bay, which runs many miles up the Island, it is out of my power to paint the beauty and the Novelty of the scene. We had the Island on both sides of us, yet its beauties were different, the one was hills, dales and groves, and not a tree, plant or shrub I had ever seen before; the ground is vastly uneven, but not very high; the sugar canes cover the hills almost to the top, and bear a resemblance in color at least to a rich field of green wheat; the hills are skirted by the Palmetto or Cabbage tree, which even from this distance makes a noble appearance . . . we saw some very rich plantations, all inclosed by hedges, but of what kind I know not. The next object that engaged our attention, was a high rock, on the sides of which grew a vast number of Oranges and lemons. At the top is a large building, which, our Pilot tells us, is the Old Barracks. . . .

“We have cast anchor at about a mile or little more from the town of St. Johns’s, which we have in full view. It lies up a hill, and is certainly a fine town, but the houses are low, and have no chimneys, so that at this distance, it does not make a grand appearance; tho’ I dare say it will mend, when we come nearer to it. . . . We have been just seven weeks on

our passage, so that after all we ought to be satisfied; for that is no bad passage."

This was much the same prospect which had confronted the eyes of a certain mariner a few years before, as he anchored at Rockly Bay in Tobago, where the houses of Scarborough climbed up the hill toward the new Fort George.

His ship was the *John*, a slave trader of Jamaica, although he, like Miss Schaw, was out of Scotland, where he had been born only twenty-two years before. Already master, soon his name was to be famous indeed.

But as he went ashore to report to his Tobago agents, Archibald Stewart & Company, and deliver himself into the hands of James Simpson, he was a distraught but determined young man. He was about to be tried for the murder of the black carpenter of his vessel.

The fate of the United States, not yet officially born, and particularly its navy, lay in the hands of Judge Surrogate Simpson of the Vice-Admiralty Court. This incident upon our distant tropical island was not only to change this young man's life, make him transfer his citizenship and ten years later become commander of the *Bonhomme Richard*; but, by this colonial British judge's decision, was to strike terror in the hearts of all English seamen.

The young master's name was John Paul, better known to us by his adopted title of John Paul Jones, future commander and father of the American navy.

He had been accused of flogging black Mungo Maxwell with a belaying pin, and the man had died before he shipped again from Tobago on the *Barcelona Packet*. But, Captain John told Judge Simpson, most of his crew

had been down with the fever, and this black fellow had whispered mutiny. If he had meant to kill the man, he would have used a pistol, for he had one handy. The judge, a slaveowner himself on his five hundred acres at Courland estate, exonerated him completely, and the decision was certified by the Hon. William Young, lieutenant-governor.

But the incident was not closed in Scotland, and upon his return he was arraigned out of spite. The English histories, incidentally, give him the worst of it; according to them his next few years are obscured. Not so; he continued to trade with friends in Grenada and Tobago, until he finally went to Virginia to take over his dying brother's plantations. A young man who could become a ship's master at nineteen was sure to make his personality felt. While other captains consorted with tavern keepers, an early biography tells us, he always hunted up the important men of whatever port he entered. And so he became friends with Washington, and was courted by all the *grande dames* of Virginia who had eligible daughters, and, just before the revolution, his heart still black with the injustice done him in his own country, he sailed magnificently up to New York in his trim sloop, and offered his services to the unborn American navy. The war had scarcely begun before he took things into his own hands.

Because of the kindness he received in Tobago, it is not likely that a few years later he himself sanctioned an attack upon the island—yet perhaps, knowing the fertility of the place, he wished his nation to be the fifth or sixth to gain the prize. Two ships, three brigs and a schooner set out from the States for Tobago. But probably no history book you have ever read records the

battle with the *HMS Yarmouth*, fifty leagues off Barbados; for it was one of our thorough defeats. The *Randolph*, with thirty-six guns and three hundred men, was blown to bits, and the others hastily scattered to the four winds. An upstart nation was not entitled to thrust its impertinent head into the little emerald islands which were now doing so well with sugar, cotton and indigo. For in the year of the Declaration of Independence, the exports from Tobago alone were valued at £20,000. Jamaica and Barbados, which not only had been settled longer, but were larger islands and had more slaves, were far in advance of this amount. But Tobago's history was just beginning. Furthermore, her estates were fewer, and there were only some twenty-five hundred white men; the majority of these were doubtless indentured servants, so that, as today, a mere handful owned the ten thousand slaves. The per capita wealth, consequently, was far greater than that of any of the other islands. No wonder that the expression in London soon became: "Wealthy as a Tobago planter"!

Those were the days when every estate house was constructed of native stone together with the bricks brought to the island as ballast. These mansions were surrounded with parterres—shaded by tamarind trees, and approached by a walk of stately palmettos, or cabbage palms, which towered fifty feet above the low rooftops. Gleaming polished floors and gilt-framed mirrors reflected the Oriental luxuriance of their cut garden flowers, while every breeze was fragrant with "perfumes that mock the poor imitations to be produced by art." Pomegranate hedges, although not as practical as the logwood or the prickly pear, were used everywhere, "so violent is the taste for beauty and scent." And we



know Tobago possessed more than one fine estate such as Janet Schaw visited in St. Kitts.

Her hostess, Lady Isabella, met her at the door with a little mulatto girl, about five years old, who was a kind of pet, like a tame animal, and decked out in the fashion of an "infant Sultana," all in rich brocades. The hall, this traveler describes, was "superbly fine; the roof lofty, and ornamented in a high degree. It is between fifty and sixty feet long, has eight windows and three doors, all glazed; it is finished in Mahogany very well wrought, and the panels finished in with mirrors. . . . The drawing room and bedchambers are entirely fitted up and furnished in the English taste."

In this setting, looking out upon gardens which would make those of today appear wretched, the ladies of these landed squires languished, never lifting a hand except to direct one of the dozens of black servants. Although Miss Schaw chaffed at their never touching anything more potent to drink than sangaree, which was made of a dash of Madeira, water, sugar and lime juice, she found the women amiable, intelligent, and not at all provincial; for their "lutstrings and tiffities"—that is, silks and taffetas—were styled after the fashions which came every six weeks from London.

But they might as well have been in dreary London, to judge from their pallor, which many writers describe. Whenever it was necessary for them to stir out into the hot sun, they screened their faces with masks—not "altogether as a preservative to their complexion," one male visitor decided, for the ladies were "frequently seen at a distance unmasked, but as soon as they are approached near, on goes the vizer, thro' which, by a couple of peep-holes, about the size of English shillings, they have an

opportunity of staring in the faces of all they meet. . . ."

This delicate description hardly goes with the parade of victuals which were laid on these estate tables until they must very literally have been groaning boards. No end of meats were served at once; beef was imported all the way from New England, in true British disdain for tropic cattle, just as Argentine meat is often eaten in Trinidad today; but there was native kid, lamb, poultry and fish. Guinea fowl, turkey, pigeons and turtle followed one after the other on Sheffield silver platters; kingfish was highly prized because, although white, it tasted something like their cold northern salmon; but grouper, mullet and snapper were as often served. All of these were dressed with spicy sauces, and a little red-pepper pod was laid beside each plate of handsome Chelsea or the new incomparable Wedgewood jasper ware. And being English, they must have jellies, pastries and puddings and preserves, in addition to every tropical fruit, of course. For they were well acquainted with the luxuries of even today, and served hearts of palm salad, and alligator pears. Yet butter was imported from Ireland, and the sugar cane which their husbands grew and which they saw from every "glazed" window was sent to England to be refined, so that it was returned at the handsome price of three shillings a pound.

It was a time, of course, of the greatest elegance imaginable. Elizabeth's day was robust and colorful and adventurous; Victoria's was rich and inventive; but the subjects of those reprehensible Georges took their manners from France and their learning from classical Greece—and their money from the great plantations in what were being called the Sugar Islands. Those were

the days of that dandified clergyman and author, Laurence Sterne, and of the "men of feeling," so that it is not strange to read that Miss Schaw, a good Scotch Presbyterian, believed the rectors were coxcombs. One gentleman of the cloth, on seeing this visitor in the pew, frowned upon the sermon he was about to deliver, and abruptly left the church for his rectory, where he procured a more eloquent one from a new batch—prepared, perhaps, by the Prebendary of York himself, for Sterne had written an amazing volume of sermons which many a pastor used.

On the same day as their masters went to church, the blacks held market, for they alone raised all the provisions, fruits and vegetables. Sunday, too, was a good day to hire a black workman at a cheap price, for on their free day they were their own masters. And although they went around "half-naked," the women with their breasts exposed, and with difficulty made to wear so much as a petticoat, on a holiday such as Christmas they decked out in their finest—just as we had seen Martin and Leotha in clothes which were never worn on any other occasion. But then the men wore picturesque smallclothes, or loose drawers—some sort of knee breeches—and tight-fitting waistcoats and black caps, and the women white muslin gowns, with turbans or headkerchiefs which were then called "tenahs." "Both men and women carried neat white wicker-baskets on their heads . . . in one a little kid raised its head from amongst flowers of every hue. . . . They marched in a sort of regular order, and gave the agreeable idea of a set of devotees going to sacrifice to their Indian Gods." But they knew their gods were the Buckras, the white masters, for even when they were allowed the privilege

and license of such a special day, there were armed patrols all about to see that they did not get quite out of hand. . . .

We first savored this period through the medium of that reprint of the Anglican church records, *The Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths in Tobago from 1781 to 1817*. The entries were curious, particularly ones like this:

"1782, January 21st—a mulatto child of William Shand, a son by the name of Tristram William Shand."

Someone had been reading the *Tristram Shandy* of our old friend Laurence Sterne! But that was only the beginning of the quaint names. There was a child baptized whose mother was a woman "yellowly ting'd nam'd Fan Fan from ye Coast of Africa." All through we found popular such names as Princess, Dandy, Mercy, Zabette, Tanna, Penny, Indiana, Christy, Charmer, Juliet, Maria, Josephe and Plaisant. And of course the same propensity for classical names, like Venus and Cupid, which we know today. The men were most often called Neptune and Calypso, or Cravat, Rye, Navy, Confident, Hercules or Prince. But best of all was a young Negress entitled Umbrella!

Most common, however, were the mestees, mistiffs or mustee children. Many an entry was amusingly frank:

"Betsy, daughter of James Campbell (deceas'd) of Man of War Bay, St. John's Parish, by a black woman, not free, called Modesty, was publickly christen'd by me, this 9th day of August 1796."

Repeatedly, the names of the original owners of the estates were linked with some half-black child. It was, of course, hardly a thing to be remarked that the owners would have children by their Negro women. But this presents a less glamorous picture than was true of the towns, where the gay young blades, so gallant to their languishing ladies, were attracted by the black beauties as were the men in our own New Orleans in the same period. This "crime," our Presbyterian traveler asserts, "seems to have gained sanction from custom. . . . The young black wenches lay themselves out for the white lovers, in which they are but too successful. This prevents their marrying with their natural mates, and hence a spurious and degenerate breed, neither so fit for the field, nor indeed any work, as the true bred Negro. Besides these wenches become licentious and insolent past all bearing, and as even a mulattoe child interrupts their pleasures and is troublesome, they have certain herbs and medicines, that free them from such an incumbrance. . . . By this many perish every year."

But in the midst of this sybaritic existence, with all the advantages of the tropics and the comforts of England, when the price of sugar was rising and its consumption in England had *quadrupled* since the start of the century, the colonists in Tobago received a rude jolt. For their mother country had gone to war with France again. The *Register*, begun in that very year, starts off with this terse statement:

"19th April, 1781—George Ferguson, Lieut-Governor, British.

"2nd June, 1781—Count Dillon, Governor, French."

This was the most famous siege of Tobago. That the French were more eager to capture it than the officials to withstand the attack at any price is due almost entirely to the planters, who most of all wanted peace so that they could continue to reap their rich harvests. Under Comte de Grasse, the French were invading all the British West Indies. St. Vincent had capitulated, as well as Dominica; and Admiral Hood, after an engagement off Martinique, was forced to refit his ships at Antigua. Meanwhile, the rest of the British fleet was protecting Barbados, and there Tobago's Governor Ferguson sent word, by way of the *HMS Rattlesnake* to *HMS Sandwich*—wonderful names! Meanwhile, the French had taken advantage of the moment to slip into Bacolet Bay with their ships, the *Pluton*, the *Experiment* (this name was appropriate), the *Raileuse* (which, however, carried only thirty-two guns to the flagship's seventy-four), the *Eagle*, four sloops, and the *Sensible*, a "flute."

But here the comic-opera atmosphere, suggested by these fantastic ship-names, vanished. A cannon staved the French off at Bacolet Point, and the current carrying them away from Scarborough, they ended on the other side of the island at our old friend, Courland Bay. The battery of three eighteen-pounders there was of little use to the British, for they were in such a position that their back could be fired upon. But Major Hamilton, the doughty forefather of today's Greenhill owner, trained a gun on them from Black Rock, close by, until the small militia of four hundred men, which was all Tobago had, could be deployed along the high road that leads from Scarborough to the cliffs above Courland.

By this time the planters were terrorized; one of them

who lived on the heights of Concordia (north and west of Terry Hill), offered to set his canes on fire to stop the progress of the French militia, which had already landed. Others fled their houses, to the surprise of the invading commander, who told them they must return or their estates would be plundered and destroyed. He then informed Governor Ferguson that he had three thousand men, and would give any terms if capitulation was prompt. When the British refused, he sent to Martinique for reinforcements.

This time the French meant business.

Houses were burned, but to no avail. The enemy had come around to Scarborough again and captured the town. Yet the English had word that forces were hastening to their assistance, and they hung on, retreating to a secure position on the Main Ridge, to the very road, or trail, we had taken on our hike to the ridge. This they rightly believed was impregnable. With their reinforcements, the French closed in on them, surprised again that they found not one British subject. The Marquis de Bouillé ordered one plantation burned, then another. If no word was received, he announced, they would go on burning at regular intervals.

The Governor, who had been carefully ensconced on the Main Ridge, came down to find—"to my very, very great mortification," he wrote in his defense—that the militia could not and would not hold out any longer. By this time the planters were willing to accept any terms, as long as their estates would be left intact. So Tobago surrendered.

There was a great deal of bickering over terms, which the English historians report testily. But the record seems only too much in favor of the French. The money

exacted was entirely used to reconstruct the estate houses, and the planters were allowed to preserve their civil government, laws, customs and ordinances; even the justices continued holding court. These concessions were written into the Treaty of Paris two years later.

For twelve years Tobago became French—insofar as it could with an almost totally English population, still conforming to British laws. But every molehill of an infraction of the promises is raised into a mountain by the unconvinced historians.

The English did not then understand the French, and never will. Yet there is more than one impartial observer who believes that the colonies under the tricolor are far better governed than those under the lion and unicorn. In writing of the early days of colonization of the Spanish Main and the islands, Philip A. Means has said, "It is a curious product of the colonial genius of the French people that, although there were not more than 12,000 of them [up until 1700] in all the Caribbean colonies, they succeeded without apparent conscious effort in impressing the Negro masses with a collective character distinctly French. . . . This arose, in great measure, from the singularly sympathetic and conciliatory spirit which Frenchmen have always displayed towards races distinct from their own with whom they have come into contact as rulers. . . . They were, in short, great colonizers who ruled other races better than did either the Spaniards or the English."\* And Mr. Means is biased, if at all, in favor of the Spanish.

The British naturally will never admit anything of the sort. Regrettably for the present amity between

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\* Philip A. Means, *The Spanish Main, Focus of Envy*, 1492-1700. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1935.



nations, they still feel as Miss Schaw did. In St. Kitts she came upon an estate named Monkey Hill, which led her to digress upon these little creatures that have now been killed off in many of the islands. At the time, they were the worst of pests, and she likens them immediately to the French, for they "grin, laugh, chatter and make grimaces. Their frolicks are mischievous, their thefts dextrous. They are subtle enemies and false friends. When pursued, they fly to the mountain and laugh at their pursuers, as they are as little ashamed of defeat as a French admiral or general."

Whatever the English felt then, they were grateful. Their new governor, Count Dillon, was one of those ubiquitous Irishmen, so often found in this period in the forefront of revolution—either in France, North America or Spanish America. Under his rule Tobago's population grew, her exports increased; Scarborough was represented in the House of Assembly.

Little perhaps remains of that and previous French conquests. One reason for this is the same old provincial arrogance which caused a later British civil servant to burn the French records because "no one could read them." Only a few names have been perpetuated. Before this, there had been estates called, from some former colony, Trois Rivières; there was Bacolet, too, and Les Coteaux, Lambeau and Parlatuvier. From this twelve-year period must come the other French names which appear—somehow more fittingly than those flat-footed British ones—on our modern map: Frenchman's River keeps on the other side of the island from Englishman's Bay; Anse Flamengo edges King Peter's Bay, Anse Fromager (Silk-cotton Cove) is neighbor to Culloden and Mt. Thomas. Then there is Bon Accord estate, and

Petit Trou next Kennedy Point; French Hill and Morne Quiton tower above Scarborough, Morne d'or above Cardiff, Louis d'or above Roxborough. Even today, there is a French heritage, and more than one family resists the usual British attitude, and claims the other blood.

But it was neither the French government nor its officials which in 1790 dealt the worst blow to the island colony.

First of all, a mutiny broke out among the French soldiers, who beat their officers unmercifully and planted dread fear among the inhabitants. After two days of this reign of terror, they set fire to the town, then called Port Louis. The flames, started in the early hours of the morning, ate up the wooden houses; the dry season and a high wind spread the conflagration in every direction until it reached the sea. Slaves had been sent from the surrounding estates, but the soldiers forbade them entrance to the scene, and the town was reduced to ashes.

Scarcely had the ashes cooled when came a "most tremendous hurricane," the first one ever recorded in a zone supposedly out of reach of this phenomenon. Twenty ships were tossed upon the shore; Mr. Hamilton's sugar works at Riseland, at the lower end, were destroyed. His part in this last tragedy is lugubriously recounted by a historian:

"Mr. Hamilton, being absent from home, knew nothing of what had happened to his habitation; but returning in the night, which was excessively dark, and groping for his door, he fell over some rubbish which was left on the spot [where the house had recently been] and so far hurt himself that he was confined for a week."

## *Cane and Hurricane*

"THE necessities of the island," Sir William Young wrote in his diary when early in 1792 he visited his plantations in Tobago, "have demanded the residence of the planter; and the critical state of the French government, and the wild notions and conduct of the French people in the colonies, have brought the old English settlers in Tobago, and their Negroes, to a system of reciprocal regard and mutual determination to resist particular wrongs or a general attack. The planters here talk of the Negroes as their resort, to be depended on against either a licentious garrison, an arbitrary governor, or the mad democracy of the French hucksters."

Yet from the rest of his account the island seems not to have suffered too much ill from either the hurricane two years before, or the foreign government, which to those sturdy Tories represented the radicals of that day.

Mr. Hamilton's estate at Riseland must have been quickly repaired, for Sir William went to visit him there. Both of these men appeared among the original grantees, but the baronet had stayed in England, writing books and traveling or serving as a member of Parliament, while Mr. Hamilton looked after both their interests. That Sir William was making a handsome profit on his investment is easily deduced from the fact that, as

an absentee landlord, he was liable for an annual six-per-cent tax on the gross value of all the sugar and rum his estate produced—and still he profited well. His slaves he found to be quite satisfied, and one old Castalio approached him as a “kind of deputation from the rest” to say that “Massa Hamilton” was a very good manager and master.

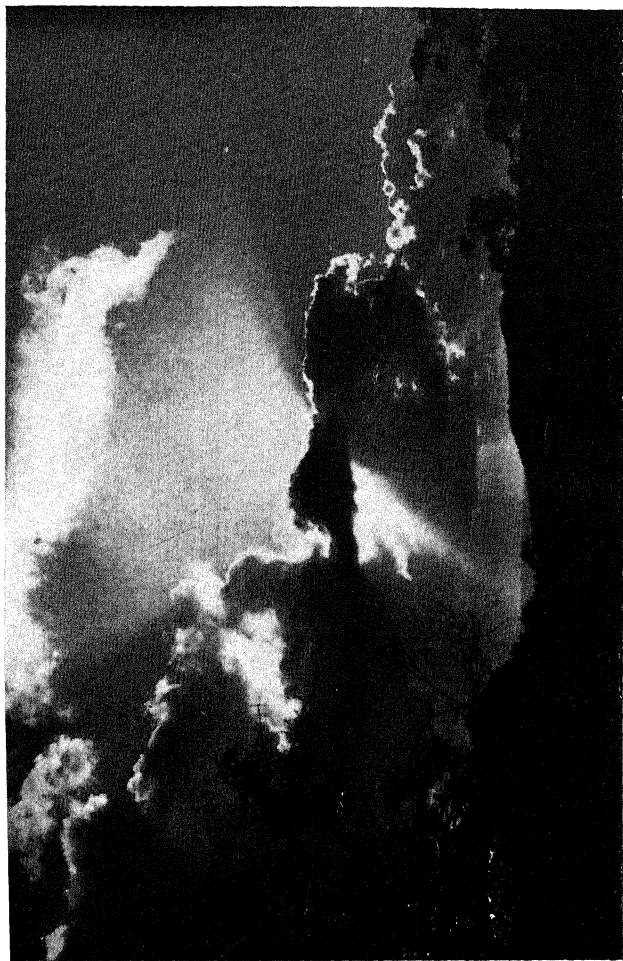
We had first become interested in the Hamilton family not only because we knew their descendants today, but because of the numerous entries about them in our *Register*. The very first notation under the baptisms performed by the Anglican rector was that of three children of this family. In the space of fifteen years, we discovered, John Hamilton’s wife Susannah had borne him eleven children. More remarkable for this period was that only one seems to have died an early death. And far more remarkable still, five of them were born in the same month of April, between the fourth and seventeenth—in 1782, 1783, 1784, 1792 and 1793, the latter two being born in not only the same month, but on the same day. Another time Susannah had two children just a year and two days apart, and two more nearly on the same day of February. Perhaps this regularity, through extraordinary luck or great abstinence, further characterized John Hamilton as a good estate manager.

Sir William, who was later to become one of Tobago’s most honored governors, was struck by the beauty of the island and its infinitely varied scenery as he jogged up the windward road on one of his host’s best mounts to look over his Louis d’or estate, near Roxborough. Surprise mixes with admiration as he notes in his journal the beautiful entrance to the estate house at Queen’s Bay, a small concavity at the northern end of Roxborough Bay. The entrance at the beach led through brick and

stone pillars, "not unlike the great gate of an English park," and the path advanced through a broad avenue of coconut palms, then past a street of Negro houses, a mile from the gate, which was terminated by the sugar works. This building he said had the appearance of a church, built in the form of the letter T, with a tower in the center. Above the works, on a tall precipice, stood the mansion itself, "nobly commanding the whole vale. A fine river winds from the back mountains, under the point of the great ridge on which the house stands, and then pours in a straight line, nearly by the east of the Negro village, into the sea. In its course it supplies a canal for turning the water-mill."

He particularly remarked on the great extent of the provision grounds and the "fine healthy looks" of the slaves, because they had so much food at their disposal. Further, their houses were superior to those in either St. Vincent or Antigua. Each one cost the planters, he was told, twenty-three johannes, or about forty pounds sterling. The quarters, built of boards, were about twenty-five feet long by half as wide, divided into two apartments with a kitchen at one end and a portico along the front. And he explicitly mentions that he saw no marks of the whip on their backs, from which he concluded that the punishments were "either so unfrequent or so little severe, as to leave no traces for any length of time."

We can see him now, eying the improvements and condescending to speak to all the small children—the model English landowner, restrained but benevolent. "This last year," he writes with pleasure, "I have had an increase of thirteen children, of whom only one has died." His human possessions were multiplying as favorably as his cane, and he ordered five yards of printed



The blacks call it day cleanin'.



A cocoa worker returns in the yellow afternoon.



cotton for every black woman who had brought up a child, and as further largess gave out ten barrels of pork among all his Negroes.

On his way back to Scarborough, which the French insisted upon calling Port Louis, he stopped at a Mr. Clarke's on an estate which is known today as Kendal Place. Here the first sugar that was exported to England had been raised. The house also stood on a pinnacle, and had been brought out, piece by piece, from England. Perhaps this is the same one that still stands there today; it is chalet architecture, and had been completely built on the other side of the ocean. Sir William did not mention the construction, but he was struck with the gardens and the birds of splendid plumage, which in Tobago, he says, "are indeed at once delightful and astonishing."

His visit was a short one, for he owned property in the other islands; yet he must have been impressed with Tobago above the rest to have accepted the governorship a decade later. Although the island was not a twentieth part cultivated, he wrote down in his journal, it could be improved; Mr. Hamilton told him there were no rocks to interfere with cultivation, and he himself saw that there were large fields of Guinea grass, even in the dry season, which would "fatten cattle of the largest breed. As a timber and victualling country," he concluded, "it seems valuable in an imperial, as well as a commercial point of view; a resource to armies and fleets, as well as to the merchant and planter."

He did not need to report these last observations to the British government or its navy. They knew its value well enough, and the very next year the old hostilities broke out. The planters were ready indeed to welcome



their country's land and sea forces, which "reduced," as the British always say, the colony again to an English dependency.

At the same time, on the rampage and eager to make up for past defeats, the navy captured Martinique. Incidentally, this was the year that Captain Bligh, of *Mutiny on the Bounty* fame, succeeded in bringing the first breadfruit trees to St. Vincent, from the South Seas. It would serve as a cheap food for the slaves.

But Tobago was not altogether happy upon once more becoming British. Few were the planters who did not boast a good Anglo-Saxon surname, yet when the colony reverted to the country which had largely settled it, all former laws passed there were declared null and void! In contrast to France's generous allowances for English customs and laws, that old blackguard, George III, considered the island merely a conquered possession.

Misfortunes did not come singly. In the *Register* under that year, we find this ominous beginning:

"1793. Alexander Tullock, late Manager on Kings Bay Estate, died at the house of Mr. William Paterson, Lower Scarborough of a *putrid fever* on 6th day of July and buried on the 8th in the ground behind (the said) Wm. Paterson's house by John Mathews.

"1793. Sarah Maria, daughter of James Mitchell Esquire by Marcia Gordon a free Mulatto Woman died on 15th and was buried on the 16th of Augt. in the ground called Southfield by the Revd. John Mathews."

Yellow fever had struck Tobago.

No less than forty-two deaths occurred this year, an

abnormal number which was rapidly to be exceeded. Only three years later, the new governor-in-chief and captain general, His Excellency William Lindsay, died at Orange Hill estate, "aged about 36 years as was generally thought." Most of the deaths, indeed, came to those who were appallingly young. Yet the salary of the governor was worth the risk, for Tobago paid £1500, as much as any of the islands granted.

Despite these dangers, our island was shipping more and more hogsheads of sugar. In five years at the close of the century, exports doubled. Puncheons of rum and molasses, which were casks of about seventy imperial gallons, increased even more spectacularly, and to this was added some shrub, a cordial of fruit juices and spirits.

Other islands suffered from natural disasters of hurricane and drought or insurrections of the slaves, but not Tobago. The island of Antigua, for example, has no streams. A few years after Miss Schaw visited there, its exports grew to fifteen thousand hogsheads, which was something more than Tobago shipped. Yet three times in the previous decade, *not one* cask was filled, because there had been no rain, and the cane would not grow. Tobago's precious watershed along the Main Ridge was worth more than all the metals it might contain. By 1798 the island's shipments were exceeded by only four other colonies in the West Indies. One of these was Martinique, which was once more French; the others were huge Jamaica, flat Barbados and, very surprisingly, St. Vincent, despite its recent Carib uprisings.

Although the wealth of Tobago rested heavily upon sugar, cotton and indigo were still being produced.

These native products gradually became too plentiful throughout the world, but for a short while, Orange Hill estate had the distinction of growing the finest cotton the world had ever seen. The Manchester mills reported in their trade papers that they had succeeded in spinning the yarn into such delicate threads that the muslin manufacturers of Glasgow paid twenty guineas the pound for it. In 1796, eight hundred bales of this sea-island cotton went to England; two years later, only fifty. Eli Whitney in America had invented the cotton gin, and the Caribbean planters surrendered to mass production at a price lower than they could meet even with their own slave labor.

Besides, sugar prices were soaring sky-high, and they could not afford to spare an acre from this green gold which grew so easily and luxuriantly upon every slope, right up to the crests of the hills. The water power for the mills was here; the rushing streams served a double purpose, nourishing the cane, and later turning the wooden wheels that ground out the juice. And their slaves cost them little enough after the first purchase price.

The black men were the real foundation of wealth in the Sugar Islands. For three hundred years, since the time of Hawkins, they had been pouring in. Jamaica alone had imported half a million, and that was only a third of the whole. Many of them died on the overcrowded slave ships, which never carried enough water and often kept the bucks in irons during the whole long journey. The mortality before arrival was complacently estimated at nearly twenty per cent, fifteen of this during the voyage and the rest in the very harbors of the islands, of "diseases" contracted on the way.

As soon as a slaver entered the harbor, an advertisement was posted, and prospective owners went aboard to see the stock, as if these black human beings were so many cattle, or bolts of cotton. An able man in his prime cost £50; a strong woman, who could produce more and more of her kind, brought nearly as much; a youth approaching manhood was valued a little less, at £47; young girls, a pound under that; boys and girls, £40 to £45; and even a child just born brought £5. In addition, the colonial tax or duty was fixed at twenty shillings—a pound sterling. But even a mule was worth £28.

As the estate men walked along the ship's deck in front of these blacks, the slaves, all naked, were as a rule neither ashamed nor downcast. They understood that good money had been paid for them, probably to an African chief who had rounded them up or who habitually kept captives of war; naturally, they expected to be sold again. And the sea voyage had been so arduous, they evidently decided that life could be no worse than it had been, and often went out of their way to entice a buyer, throwing out their black chests, grinning and laughing and parading themselves. But others were merely sullen, or indifferent, as Miss Schaw records:

“They stood up to be looked at with perfect unconcern. The husband was to be divided from the wife, the infant from the mother; but the most perfect indifference ran thro’ the whole. They were laughing and jumping, making faces at each other, and not caring a farthing for their fate. This is not however without exception; and it behooves the planter to consider the country from whence he purchases his slaves.”

This last sentence gave us pause when first we read it. Always we had spoken, as everyone does, merely of "the blacks," lumping them all together. Yet we had seen men on the road who looked for all the world like black Irishmen—complete to chin whiskers. Others resembled apes; there were those who were fat and sullen; those who were lean and merry. It was not possible to determine what sort of Negro each individual was; in so many generations they had mixed their blood beyond analysis. Yet, if we knew something more about their different characteristics, we should have a clue to understanding, and perhaps see what warring, conflicting blood ran together in their veins.

One day we were talking about the lack of crafts and arts among these people—lumping them, again. Someone had casually told us, "Most of them came from Nigeria." That was strange, for we knew of the handsome bronzes which had been discovered in Benin, now part of British Nigeria. The truly wonderful sculpture of that classical period, about 1500 to 1690, was being cast at the time of the greatest exportation. Did the slaves really come from this part? After all, Africa, even the West Coast alone, is a great territory.

Finally Bryan Edwards came to our rescue. Edwards was an Englishman, born in the middle of the eighteenth century, who not only ran a large and successful sugar plantation in Jamaica, but was sufficiently interested in the Negroes to study them, and to write the first and still one of the best books on the British West Indies, which was published in 1793 and ran through at least five editions. We have already quoted from him. It is a pleasure to turn those yellowed pages, and to read the lucid style of a man who was more interested in

writing, by his own admission, than learning the classical poets—a prerequisite of the educated Englishman in that elegant period. Aided by his own firsthand knowledge he classified the blacks into nationalities.

From the southern part of that great hump on the African West Coast, Edwards says, came the type known as *Mandingoes*. The natives of the windward coast, in what is now French Senegal, sixteen down to thirteen degrees north of the equator, were not true Negroes at all. Though their skin was black, their hair was a mass of silky curls; they had neither flat noses nor thick lips, and were “exempt from that strong and fetid odour” of most of the other slaves. Moreover, they were Mohammedans by faith and, Edwards guesses, probably had some Moorish blood. Certainly they felt superior to the rest of the blacks, and were not adapted to hard labor.

The *Koromantyns*, or Gold Coast Negroes, who lived only five degrees north of the line, were the real blacks. They had a firmness of both body and mind; they were ferocious, stubborn, and met death with indifference. This stoicism, Edwards decides, was probably conditioned by the numerous African wars they engaged in, and the custom, similar to the suttee of India and the East Indies, for the wives and subjects to die with their masters. Their naturally warlike qualities led to the Jamaica riots of 1760; not that they were so ill-used, but merely because they were newly purchased, and wanted their freedom. They were even reported to have seasoned their rum with the blood of their victims. When one of this type was sick on a plantation, his master came to encourage him. In a “tone of self-reproach and conscious degeneracy,” the slave moaned, “Massa, since we

come to White man's country me lub life too much!" This was perhaps construed as an indirect compliment to the kindness of his owner, but to the black man it was a definite sign of retrogression.

In contrast, the *Widah* or *Fida* Negroes, called *Papaves* in the West Indies, who came from equatorial French Dahomey, were the most docile and best disposed of all. Although neighbors of the fierce, disdainful *Koromantyns*, they were apprehensive of death; but they were good agriculturists, having been farmers in their own land. Their propensity for gambling perhaps stemmed from the same source, for they had tried their luck against nature in raising crops.

The *Eboes* actually came from Benin, or Nigeria—the lowest and most wretched type in Africa, according to our amateur anthropologist. Although much yellower in countenance, they had longer lower jaws, and quite resembled baboons. By temperament they were very despondent, and had to be coaxed and gentled into thinking life was worth while; but they responded to good treatment. The females of this tribe were better laborers, and the men were cannibals. Two were actually convicted at Antigua in 1770 for eating a fellow slave.

So these last were the artisans! Despondency and timidity perhaps fitted in with an artistic temperament, but we were discouraged over the description of their appearance. The only explanations are that the ones shipped out from the kingdom of Benin were either slaves captured by the rulers, originally from another part of Africa, or that their artistic efforts languished under the hard labor of the plantation.

"That punishment which excites the *Koromantyn* to rebel," Edwards says, "and drives the *Ebo* to suicide,

is received by the *Papaws* as the chastisement of legal authority, to which it is their duty to submit patiently." No wonder the planters inquired carefully after the nation whence they came!

There is one last classification, which may surprise you. The natives of the Congo and Angola (well below the equator, and now Portuguese territory), which we somehow think of as the wildest of savages, were actually mild and docile. Their skin was as we imagine, deep and "glossy" black, but they made better domestics than field laborers, were reputedly more honest than the rest, and often became expert "mechanicks."

"Negroes," indeed! Better lump together the Nordics, the Latins and the Hebrews as whites, and expect them all to act the same, as to fail to differentiate between these widely varied tribes of Africa. Of course, as Edwards points out, they lost many of their distinguishing traits in slavery, and tended toward uniformity; they became, as he admits do all conquered and enslaved people, distrustful, cowardly, liars and thieves. By nature they were polygamous, and passionate in their love-making—a characteristic well enough known today. Their regard and even veneration for old age is more open to question, although our Martin and Leotha do call old Providence "King," even as they often laugh at him. Their treatment of cattle was brutal, and even their dogs were ill-used, so that, our historian shrewdly observes, he could always tell one of their mongrels by its cringing aspect. Loquacious they all tend to be, taking an interminable length of time to come to the point—how often had we seen this defense-gesture! On the other hand, they commanded figurative expressions which Edwards was enough of a poet to say would befit



any bard. He recounts an example. One of his servants had brought him a letter, and immediately dropped on the floor to sleep as only this race can, until his master had composed an answer. When he was ready, another servant prodded him: "You no hear Massa call you?" The other stirred, looked up, then returned to his slumbers. "Sleep," he declared, "hab no massa."

Our planter had less patience with their music, which he claimed was highly overrated, damning it for the very reasons we praise it today: the songs were always melancholy (the blues), chiefly improvised (real swing), and confined as a rule to satirical or ribald songs (the "calypsoes" Leotha sings to us).

Yet there is no doubt that Bryan Edwards was an exceptionally understanding man for his time, although the fact of slavery he took as a matter of necessity, and wrote as a great apologist, inventing a hundred reasons why such societies as those for the suppression of the slave trade, founded in London as far back as 1784, would be the ruination of the estates. He was a prophet indeed; the planters had only fifty years more before emancipation. . . .

But we left the purchaser of slaves, knowing all these types and nations well, pacing the shipboard, ready to give two hundred and fifty dollars for a strong black. As soon as the planter had made his choice, he took his slaves to be marked by a silver brand with his initials. The *Eboes*, Edwards observes, shouted with fright at this not extremely painful process—it was the least of the hurts they were to suffer—but the brave *Koromantyns*, although mere boys, uttered not a sound.

In order to live on a decent, God-fearing English island, these naked savages had to be clothed, usually in

"osnaburghs" of a coarse German linen. Each slave was then given to a black man who had long been in service, as a kind of pensioner. This was to the advantage of the newcomers, for they learned the white man's ways and his language, and no doubt all the tricks needed to keep free of the lash, or to acquire small favors.

At each sunrise a conch shell summoned them to work, and they were marched out ahead of a white man, and a black driver who of course carried the signs of his profession, a short whip and a long one. But all the marks upon their bodies were not from those instruments, Edwards hastily points out; frequently they came gashed and tattooed from their African coast. Nonetheless, it went hard with the slave who was late to the roll call, just as the sun was rising over the dew-wet canes.

For several hours they worked, carrying baskets of manure to the fields, picking or doing whatever work the season dictated—trotting because of the driver, the sweat beginning to run down their half-naked bodies. At eight or nine they breakfasted; only now were they thoroughly warmed up, for to them the slightest early morning breeze, the least fog or cloud, chilled them as it never could an Englishman. At noon they were given two hours to eat and rest, just as we allow Martin and Leotha. At sunset, which mercifully comes early in the tropics, they finished their ten-hour day. If the weather had been wet and their master of a kindly nature or in that mood, they might receive a dram of rum—but not too much. Provisions they could grow for themselves, and sell them, too, at the market. A few of the freedmen, or tradespeople among them, lived more respectably, and often possessed a shelf or two of "plates

and dishes of queen's or Staffordshire ware." That this was no idle fancying, we found out for ourselves, a hundred and forty years after.

Edwards made out a good case for an island which has been notoriously hard upon its laborers, who are today at last protesting. Yet it is undoubtedly true that in Tobago the blacks were better cared for, in that paternalistic time, than they are today. A slave was valuable; indeed, he was essential. Hence, he was kept as healthy as possible with the poor doctoring of the time. For a year's care a surgeon received six shillings a head. And as a good-sized estate possessed between two and three hundred slaves, this fee mounted up to a good living, and not a few physicians cared for as many as five thousand blacks. Operations were extra, whether for an amputation or an inoculation, which was still being used, although vaccination had been demonstrated. For leprosy, which the Negroes brought with them, nothing could then be done, nor even for yaws. Edwards also speaks of lockjaw, and what we would call the puerperal diseases; "stomach-evil," which was no doubt dysentery or diarrhea; and, inevitably, smallpox.

There were strict masters and kind ones, and there must have been some fiends. That few of the latter existed in Tobago is due to the way in which the island was colonized. At the time of Oliver Cromwell, Jamaica was populated with many a rascal and gaol-rat, history flatly tells us. Consequently, "every day" there occurred bankruptcies, which were uncommon if not unheard of in Tobago, where the planters seem to have been uniformly of a better and more moneyed class. In the other islands, however, when an estate was sold for taxes or debts, the slaves were auctioned off separately from the disposal

of the land; their gardens were theirs no longer, and like as not they were shipped off to the mines in Mexico. This practice Edwards puts down, along with overcrowding slave ships, as the greatest evil of the time. And he prayed that the slave trade would not be stopped at least until there was a parity between the sexes; too many planters, through lack of foresight, preferred a stout male even to a pregnant female.

Tobago had its own troubles with the slaves. Back in 1770, when the colony was first getting under way, shortly after John Paul Jones visited it, there were three insurrections in two years. The possible grievances of the blacks are not recorded by the English. Yet, in view of the cordial relations between slave and planter which Sir William Young recorded, the insurrection at Christmas time, when the new century had just begun, is the more surprising.

Throughout that year of 1801 Tobago had been the scene of tragedies, which are momentarily reflected in the *Register*. There were the usual cases, such as that of Negro children, hardly a year old, dying of the worms, followed closely by a doctor who, doubtless through his lucrative practice at six shillings a head, had been able to buy the great Lowlands estate. And typical cases such as these three sailors—a toll that every West Indian harbor annually exacted in those years:

“1801 May 2nd—Richard Whitewood, born in the vicinity of London, aged about 29 years, having been in the West India trade nearly seventeen years. Capt. of the merchant ship the *Favourite*, one of the Windward Ships of Tob°. was taken ill on the Wednesday night died on Saturday morning in great pain of a putrid fever, buried the same day 5

o'clock p. m. near Studley Park house, St. George's Parish.

"June 30—Samuel Reed, aged 14 years, Native of Portsmouth, State of New Hampshire, in the United States of America, on board the *Franklin*, Capt. Tippet died on the night of 30th June, was buried the same day 1 o'clock p. m. in the burying ground Scarboro.

"N. B.—A black sailor of the name of Reid, employed about Scarboro bay, a very worthless being, died also the same night. Not known where he was buried, or how."

At the same time, we read, three young overseers died on the estates of Low Harewood, Richmond and Mesopotamia, and a clerk at Sandy Point. The Rev. Pons, rector of Tobago during this period, was more explicit than most. He records also the fate of a lawyer, a new settler of only a month's standing, who died of "bilious fever," for he was of a "gross habit of body"; whereas a young man, college-bred as was the lawyer, who had "showed an early turn to Poetry" died of "an inflammation of the bowels."

When we come upon entries like this, when suddenly a life is lighted up for us at its finish, we want to damn all that the tropics stood for in those fever-ridden days. Somehow, these single deaths are more disturbing than wars. A soldier knows his fate; he is fighting for a nation, and can fool himself into the belief that he is playing a small but necessary part in an endeavor to make his country's people greater and stronger than any other. It is the fashion to curse imperialism today, but you cannot deny the thrill in that period of building an empire, of being determined in a cause which was not

yet considered immoral. In a way, too, these young men who came out as "clarks" or managers to Tobago may have identified themselves with the larger issue; but what of their individual aspirations, their sweethearts whom they had left behind and who would have joined them once they were established? And there is more than one record of a marriage, followed closely by the death of the bride or her husband. These recordings stand in small type as inconsequential footnotes on the large pages of Empire history. Yet we are closer to these people for just such touches. The soldiers and their battles can go hang, we say.

Nonetheless, we turn the page and read that one hundred and one members of the garrison, mostly privates in the ranks, died this very year. And every one of them German, Dutch or, in two cases, Russian and Polish—like those Hessian mercenaries who fought against the American revolution. These aliens had taken their chances with life for the meager pay. Many of them married here; some of them probably loved Tobago, and congratulated themselves on their tropical posts. But they were no doubt a tough lot. Still most affecting are the colonists' items:

"1801 Sept. 10th—Archib. Pocknell, a young London boy aged 15, Schoolfellow to Young Chas. Scott, No. 43 [meaning, the forty-third person to die that year; Pocknell was the fifty-ninth], come out to Tobago on board the *Grwashiqui* on the Sunday 30 Augt. after having been shipwrecked on the coast of Martinique on his way to Barbados from England, taken ill of a fever on the 4th Sept., died on the 10th at 2 o'clock A. M. Buried the same day at noon in the garden of Dr. Laurie to whom he was

recommended and who attended him during his short illness with the anxiety of a Father."

At that very moment the slave insurrection was probably being plotted, for many thousands of blacks were to take part in it. The signal was to be given on Christmas night, when the canes nearest each estate were to be fired. The flames were supposed to induce the whites to hurry out, where they could easily be slaughtered. Those Negroes who remained loyal were to suffer the same punishment.

With the death of so many in his garrison that year, General Carmichael could muster only two hundred soldiers when he luckily discovered the plot. Quietly and with good sense he rounded up the thirty black ringleaders, and ordered one of them to be hanged on the signal staff at dawn, well in view of nearly the whole island. The man was raised and lowered thirty times, a cannon being fired at each elevation, so that the body of the insurgents believed all their ringleaders had perished. Whatever their complaints, the blacks murmured no more after this. But the younger ones among them were to live to be set free.

Almost a greater consternation seized the planters when one morning, during the spring of 1802, a packet arrived from England bearing the news that the Treaty of Amiens had been signed between Napoleon and England—and that Tobago was ceded to the French! The Corsican was coming into his full power, and he wanted prosperous colonies to help him pay for the wars that were subjugating all Europe. For the same basic reason the next year he was to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States for a mere eleven millions.

The planters shook their heads sadly, but a fierce hate

burned in their hearts: here was one man upon whom they could focus all their dislike of the French. There must have been a few optimists who recalled the previous treatment at the enemy's hands; but, they were answered, "This tyrant is different."

All through the hot, rainy summer they awaited their fate. One wonders if the tense situation possibly brought on the duel between the master of the ship *Emilia* and some unknown, on Courland Beach. And again, many people had died of the fever, including two more ships' captains, several estate owners, and a much-needed physician, so that the rector was constrained to note in the *Register*:

"N. B. About this time owing to the northerly winds and the exhalation from the Swamps of the Lower Town, there has been a deplorable mortality among the sailors in Scarboro Bay. . . . Eighty-six individuals belonging to the shipping . . . died of the fever, which still prevails among them."

That October the French governor arrived, and the minds of the planters were put at rest. Napoleon, who had married Josephine, herself a native of the West Indies, graciously continued the French tradition of changing none of Tobago's laws. So happy was the legislature that they granted this General Sabuquet not only a salary of £3300, but a gift in addition of £4000—a total of thirty-six thousand dollars.

Immediately thereafter, Napoleon began his rise to dictatorship, and that November, Tobago cast its unanimous vote to make him consul for life.

The peace which Napoleon had hoped would last a decade was broken the next year and, for the very last time, Tobago changed hands when Commodore Hood,



avenging an old grudge, delivered the island to the British once more.

This was Tobago's final disposition, which was confirmed after a number of years when Napoleon was exiled to Elba. Without pride, Tobago looked back into its three centuries of written history to find it had been the most fought-over island in the Caribbean; it was, perhaps, a justification of its worth as a fertile land, but the constant changes of government had been trying. The Slavs from the duchy of Courland and the Dutch from Flanders had long ago disappeared; hardly a name, save the Duke's, still remained on the map. And during this hectic period the island had been claimed twenty-four successive times, only to change hands after a few years, or even months, until it eventually reposed with the country which first planted its flag upon its shores.

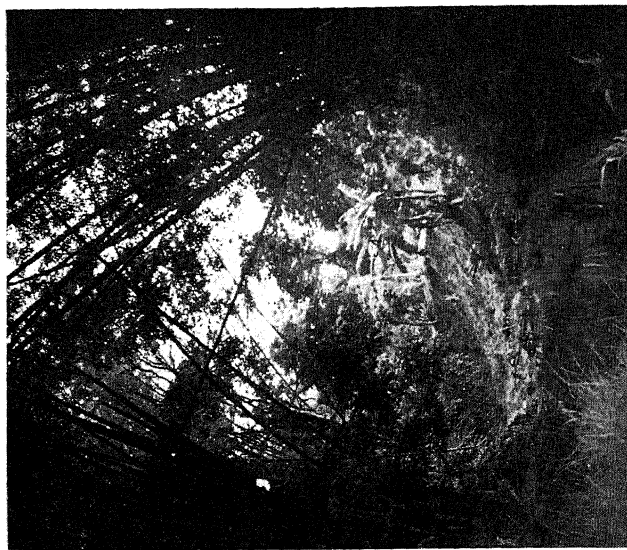
Yet the English planters were not thoroughly confident of their possession as long as Napoleon held sway, and every ship brought them hurrying to the wharf for the latest news from Europe. They must have been frightened out of their wits when the French fleet sailed past them; in fact, if Nelson on board his *Victory* had caught up with the enemy as he hoped to do, the battle of Trafalgar would have been fought at their doorstep. As it was, he arrived at Trinidad just too late, and English sea power was vindicated off Gibraltar.

With only seventy-five sugar estates to divide the profits, Tobago had entered into its period of greatest prosperity, a fact which was reflected at home when the colonial office sent out that distinguished absentee landlord, member of Parliament and man of letters, the same Sir William Young we have met before. Once more the legislature showed its gratitude, and on two occasions





Such jungle the British call "the bush."



Bamboo shades the river to the Retreat.

unanimously rewarded his masterly public service with grants of two thousand pounds. For eight years he gave Tobago the enlightened management which was hinted in those brief notes of his journal, and he died peacefully on the island—perhaps like John Poyntz, who you remember in 1682 said he here preferred to take up his *quietus est*.

The black men continued to labor in the cane fields, and during the spring cutting, stood day and night watches in the boiling houses, where those enormous iron kettles, which we still see being used as cattle troughs, seethed and bubbled with the makings of sugar, rum and molasses. But it was the beginning of the end; the year the new governor took office, slave trade with the African coast was abolished. Henceforth, no new black blood was to enter the shores—supposedly—and it behooved the planters to husband their stock of black cattle.

These slaves also helped build the Anglican church at Scarborough, and the courthouse. This was after the death of Sir William, whose name is all but the last penned in the *Register*. His burial notice was recorded without flourishes, without praise, just as laconically as was that of a master tailor who died four days later. For the Rev. Newton lost no love over the governor, and tersely wrote, "Gov. & Commander in Chief etc. in, and *Over This Island Tobago*." Some personal grudge lay behind this unofficial description. All through the last pages of the *Register* the quarrel is continued with petty contradictions by the rector of statements added in the governor's own writing, together with "hands, impertinently poised," which note that Sir William tore out this or that page—for what reason it is hardly clear, as most of the deleted pages were obituaries. Only one place

makes us raise an eyebrow; there the governor has affixed his seal, with an intervening space, directly below the recording of two "natural daughters" (not his).

This is not the only revealing light upon those people casually disclosed in the pages. We learn that in 1796 there was a black hairdresser; that many of the women, always designated as "spinsters," could not write when they were married, and merely made a sign, so that it is recorded: "Mary Baine [or whatever the name], her (X) mark." Even one lieutenant colonel of the garrison had to affix his signature in the same way. And although the "Expense of the Poor Box" was carefully accounted, it seems hardly a fair distribution of funds for "old Lucile" to have been granted in the space of six weeks, thirty-four shillings, for in other cases the rector is rather testy:

"N. B. This man has lived at the expence of the Public of Scarboro for nearly V months Mr. Coker gave him 1/2 doz Porter MM. James Bailey & Rob. Bruce each two shirts."

But a little later, among the prayer books distributed to the soldiers and the indigent, he sends a sick carpenter a case of gin, and to a schoolmistress a bottle of Madeira. Best of all is a will, not recorded by the rector, but appended to the serious history of lawyer Woodcock:

"In the name of the Lord our God, amen,  
I, Betty Creighton, now in pain,  
And fearing my days are nearly spent,  
Make this last will and testament—  
Though weak in body, yet sound in mind  
As e'er a Solomon left behind.

First, I declare this earthly crust  
May decently be laid to dust,  
And let some stone point out the spot  
Where Betty Creighton lies to rot;  
And to defray the cost thus told,  
My negress, Fanny, must be sold.  
Next, to Betty Hunter, my friend so true,  
I leave the remaining residue;  
Also my household furniture—  
Though I must confess the gift is poor;  
For she must take on her the trouble  
To see me laid beneath the stubble.  
Next, to old Mary Ann Denoon,  
(Although she'll follow very soon),  
I leave my house and lot of land,  
And stock, the whole at her command.  
Old James Denoon and his son James, joint  
Executors I do appoint.  
Of my last will this is my whole  
So God above receive my soul.

—May 20, 1815.”

God watched over all Tobagonians for the next two decades. Government House was built, Moravian missions were founded, and sugar continued to fill the bottoms of most ships leaving Scarborough. But in 1833, the island was demoted, and the new official of that year came out as only a lieutenant governor, subject to the chief of the Windward Islands government; Tobago also lost its vice-admiralty. Although its importance had not yet diminished, this was the Sign. The fact which it signified was the Act of Emancipation, to go into effect the next year.

For a long time there had been discussions at one estate house or another; groups of men gathered and talked together, at first apprehensively, then indignantly.

They had seen the handwriting on the wall when slave trading had been abolished in 1807, but they had refused to believe the signs. Why, it was impossible! It would ruin the West Indies! Not alone themselves; no, they were wealthy enough and big enough, some of them, not to consider it entirely from their own selfish angle. But the government at home must expect a considerable drop in revenue. His Majesty's subjects in these waters would be left stranded. Surely, this was too great a sacrifice for a principle!

Principle, indeed! Let Parliament come out and see for themselves, let *them* deal with black men every day. What would these childish souls do with themselves, once they were free? Without the goad of slavery, they would never work; they had been cared for too long. More than that: they might go completely wild, and butcher their old masters, forgetting all that had been done for them in recent years. Remember the last insurrection.

So they talked, vacillating between anger and despair and fear. True enough, there had been abuses in the old days, but these had been abolished long ago; what was not prohibited by law was demanded by public opinion. Knowing their slaves, accustomed to being benevolent masters, insulted that they should be regarded in London as cruel tyrants, impatient with the liberal theories on labor which were just coming into existence, distrustful of this news of general parliamentary reform, on the eve of Victoria's long reign, the planters finally threw their not very influential weight against all such acts. By this attitude they prejudiced the world more than ever against them, brought further hardships upon the plantations and, by trying to stem a tide that had

already begun to flow, made life doubly hard for themselves.

It was our own Civil War, fought a quarter of a century earlier. Except that these planters could not openly struggle. They had a certain rough fondness for their slaves, whom they saw every day, for more hours than they saw their own children and wives. Moral right was against them, but the transition which had trapped them in its epoch ruined their lives. It was not a clear question, besides, and they rightly inveighed against the manner of the emancipation, as the government ruled it should be put into effect.

In 1834, the black men were told, they would be given their freedom. "Yes, you will be free men—free to do as you wish," their masters said. And they added bitterly, "You don't have to work for us, or for anyone. Although, of course, for four years you must be apprentices."

The cart had been put before the horse, for political expediency. The voters of England could be told the blacks were free, when actually they were not—and could not be, until a new economic order had adjusted itself, for both planter and new freedman.

The Negro was bewildered. "Massa de King" had given him liberty, and with the other hand had taken it away. The old men mumbled, "The chilluns is put out as 'prentices, to some trade, but what is I to larn? I be too old to 'come cooper, carpenter, mason. All I knows, boss, is how to plant de cane an' weed an' hoe—what I larn? Massa de King, he no make dat law. You read um wrong."

The planter answered curtly, for he knew that all the good will that had been built up was now rapidly being



lost. The Negro accused him of turning the law to his own uses. Yet he would have to provide for his old blacks, to take care of them in sickness, even to allow them to live in their old dwellings until they could support themselves, build houses and set up a new life—or so he put it in general terms. Actually, his obligations ceased shortly after the law went into effect. And he stoutly maintained that the loss which he suffered would never be mended by the compensation voted him; the West Indies was to receive sixteen and a half million pounds—three-quarters of a billion dollars. Yet the commissioners appraised the value at almost twice that sum. The difference, of course, was not so much in the actual cash which the planters had expended on their slaves over a period of generations, and for which they clamored to be reimbursed; rather, it was the future loss, the new cost of labor and the consequent smaller profits in sugar. But sugar was doomed; beets were soon to be used to extract the same sweet, and the East Indies, with its coolie labor, was coming into its own.

The day at last arrived when the black men were to be unconditionally freed, their apprenticeships over. From then on, it is the history of the black man. The first of August, 1838, a century ago, was set aside for religious observances; contrary to expectations, "peace and quiet prevailed." No doubt the Negro was too bewildered, suddenly too conscious that he had no real support, to have rioted or even rejoiced. Woodcock declares that the slaves could not have been the depressed creatures they were painted, or the transition would not have been so peaceful. Our belief is that they were not so much depressed as subdued in a psychological way. And for the older generation of blacks it was a mixed blessing.

However, this was no argument for the continuation of slavery; every excuse, every defense of the old ways, referred only to a few people who would lose and to a short period when the islands would be neither one thing nor another.

Time passed rapidly after the emancipation. For the next thirty years successive laws were enacted to deal with the Negroes, making them full and loyal British subjects, in every way responsible—or so the acts had it. Their difficulties lie buried in their unwritten history.

The labor shortage that resulted—simply because many a black man would not submit to ten hours of labor, every six days out of every week—ushered in a new kind of immigration, not only with indentured white servants, which was slavery in itself, but with an even more questionable device. Chinese were imported to Trinidad; whose wealth was just beginning to be realized; the British had not seized it from the Spanish until 1797. Indian coolies were also imported, and continued coming until late in the World War.

Tobago, however, continued to receive more slaves for thirty years. These were called “captured Africans,” and, although nominally free, they were doled out from Sierra Leone and St. Helena to the West Indies. For every six that went to British Guiana and five to Jamaica, Tobago received one. The number was not large, but today there still lives a single survivor of this latter-day circumvention of slavery. Pancho Campbell, now 114 or 115 years old, was taken off a Portuguese slave trader by an English man-of-war, sent to St. Helena, and joined the batch which came out in 1851. He was marched from Charlotteville to Roxborough; but Spey-side appealed to him, and eventually he went there to

live, married a "fine gal," and settled down in 1872. The third time he married he was over the century mark, and his children and grandchildren are too many for him to remember. When Mr. Tucker of Speyside took over the estate in the 'nineties, he found Pancho was working as a *metayer*—from the French *métier*; that is, an independent cane farmer. This system had been started soon after the emancipation. The planters found that their former slaves would no longer work unless they shared in the produce; further, the white man had no money to pay them. The blacks received half the sugar, and a bottle of rum for every barrel produced. It is ironical, however, that Pancho was glad to go to work for Mr. Tucker on his estate, and still remembers that first harvest of thirteen barrels of sugar and two puncheons of molasses. At the same time, Pancho became the largest peasant proprietor and house owner in the windward district, until he finally retired at a ripe old age.

By 1906, sugar was entirely abandoned. Some time before Tobago had left the independence of the Windward Islands and become part of Trinidad, to be further demoted at the turn of this century to its present degradation as a "ward." Yet its hopes were high again; cocoa was proving a well-paying crop. In the eighteenth century this produce had been neglected for the then more lucrative sugar business, which in its turn had replaced cotton and indigo.

These are scattered notes on the last hundred years of Tobago's history. The record grows less fascinating, the language less quaint as the industrial revolution puts in its steel appearance; Victoria curbed the morals as a new economics curbed the wealth of these isles. As the competition with slave countries rubbed them from the pic-

ture, as Spain lost her hold, and the glamorous continent of South America and Mexico declared their independence at the very moment that emancipation took place, Tobago and her sisters dropped out of the limelight.

Faint echoes of history are left for the visitor nowadays. But the longer we live here, the more we feel that last century to have been as nothing: in every conversation, they speak of yesterday as if it were today; they hark back to the terrifying hurricane of 1847, the second one in Tobago's history. Coming upon the heels of emancipation, the drop in sugar prices, the change in the whole aspect of the world, it drove the old owners from their homes, and back to England. Some of the descendants have returned, but they speak nostalgically, as if they themselves had known those earlier, more luxurious days. So that it is not a trick of writing to close the island's history with the account of the night of Monday, the eleventh of October, 1847.

All that day it had been sultry and oppressive. Heavy purple clouds gathered to the west and north, which should have been warning enough in this land where the trades always blow from the northeast. But even as the clouds approached from the wrong direction and a heavy rain descended, no one was prophetic.

Darkness came, and as the lights were snuffed out in fine stone house after house, on those exposed hilltops which commanded such splendid views of bays and valleys, surrounded by gardens which had been nurtured and pruned for so many generations—suddenly lightning flashed from the clouds, and thunder rolled down the Main Ridge and rattled every windowpane. The rain came down in torrents; weak words to those who have heard its clamor upon galvanize roofs. Ears were deaf-

ened to a more ominous note: the tinkling of glasses, a plate falling from the cupboard. The fine Waterford decanters, the handsome Wedgewood platters, the Sheffield silverware, the mahogany cabinets and chairs, began to rattle and thump and creak. An earthquake was preceding the real damage.

The morning broke all yellow and gray; not a tropical brilliance but the angry tones of the north. The wind veered to the south, then careened about and blew with increased ferocity from the northeast, blowing, blowing all day and into the next night, as if saying: You planters have not had enough trials; you are closing your happy existence here; this is the end, this is the end. . . .

Stone houses were left mere shells; the roofs, the wooden rafters, the windows were blown in. Thirty-six sugar works were demolished in as many hours, and nearly five hundred Negroes' wooden cottages razed to the ground. In Scarborough, a hundred houses were swept away, and the death toll rose to two hundred people, black and white. The garrison, atop the hill, was unroofed and some of the regiment killed.

In those days Tobago had a newspaper of its own, the *Chronicle*, which a week later valiantly appeared to report:

"The most afflicting casualty that has yet come to our knowledge occurred on Mount Pelier Estate, the residence of Peter Tait, Esquire, the attorney of that property. It appears that the family, a visitor, and a few domestics, had been rather late in making their exit from the dwelling, and that when at last the necessity for an immediate escape became imperative, as the crashing of fallen materials threatened instant destruction, each made a desperate effort for

that purpose; when unfortunately Mrs. Forbes, the only daughter of Mr. Tait, and her infant child, with her servant, were, it is supposed, killed instantaneously, by the falling of an immense beam of hardwood. Mr. Tait had his right leg broken and his right shoulder severely bruised; but by great exertion succeeded in dragging himself from underneath the beam which inflicted the injury, and crawled on his hands and knees to a small unroofed outhouse, in which, with a little black boy whom he saved from the ruins and carried on his back, he remained exposed for three hours to the inclemency of the weather; and although calling for assistance at the utmost stretch of his voice, no one heard him, in consequence of the violence of the storm."

We shall leave Tobago's history with that symbolic English gentleman, the black boy on his back, crying in the wilderness of the rain and hurricane, one hundred years ago. Even now on a rainy night, his cry seems once more to be heard at Terry Hill. . . .



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III

*Black and White*

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## *Sun Helmets and High Tea*

A low red galvanize roof is all we see above the violet thunbergia, the pink corallita vines, the oleanders and palms, as we approach Studley Park house from the road. We have already passed by that crumbling wall which was doubtless used as a guardhouse when the first assembly met here, above Georgetown, nearly two centuries ago. We have walked down our road from Terry Hill, past the roaring waterfall and the steamy hot ravines, to come for tea.

The roof is but two generations old; it did not see the great disaster of a hundred years ago. But it is hurricane-proof, they say, fashioned by the present owner's father. Each side slopes up, rather like a hip roof, so that no upright surface will be presented to a fickle wind. Now the trades innocuously sweep over its far side. Yet it is a warning of the peril that might come again, and at the same time an injunction to remember the past.

The dogs are already barking at us, and little George, the redheaded younger son, comes running to greet his family's callers. Thin, solemn-faced Doody approaches more slowly to shake our hands. Neither of the boys is very tanned. If we did not know the reason, we would be shocked that they looked no healthier in this tropical setting. There is something almost pathetic, too, in their eagerness to tell us all the events of the week. Glorious,

father's great bull, went on a rampage in the dairy down below, and they have had to lock him behind strong iron bars; one of the maids is sick, and of course we know that another has gone; their aunts are here and one of them has had the fever, that is why mother has not been up to see us; they have a new room in their playhouse; the dogs had a fight; George was given some beautiful, striped fish, but one has already died. They chatter on in a strange mixture of British accent and the Tobagonian singsong they pick up from their nurse. They seem unaware of what is soon to happen to their lives.

We might, of course, nearly fool ourselves into believing this was the yesterday of history. For all the children see of their contemporaries, it might well be; that is why they like to welcome us. Yet an automobile stands in the garage; there is a radio aerial above the house; we hear the motor charging batteries for the electric lights; there are the telephone wires. The implements of today are here, as they were Christmas Eve at the Bacolet House dance. Except that the car has a broken axle, and will be laid up until one comes in a week or so from Trinidad. Then the "boss" himself will have to do the repairing, for there are no black mechanics on the island. And the radio has not functioned during all the time we have been here.

Studley Park is enclosed like a bower inside the gateway. Today the flamboyant is losing its long seed pods which they call "mother-in-laws' tongues" and soon will be vying in color with the scarlet hibiscus, which they have trained to grow as trees. The citrus trees are heavy with their sweet-smelling blossoms. And beyond the garden is a more intimate view than we have above of the palm groves that stretch out to Granby Point.

They have all come to the door to greet us. We under-

stand their feelings now; at first we thought them merely hospitable. They are glad to see another face, to talk to someone outside the family. Not that theirs is not big enough, with the three children and the friend who has come from Grenada to help teach lessons and the sisters who have come from Trinidad to spend a few weeks. And Louis, too, from that strange chalet near Roxborough which may possibly have been the one that Sir William Young commented upon; he is learning how to manage an estate like his father's by acting as bookkeeper.

The great room is pleasant and cool, its walls painted a quiet green. What most contributes to the spaciousness is the pillars and arches, separating the windows from the center of the room on three sides, like a low church with side aisles. The room is so large that the dining table, which a blue-uniformed maid is now setting for tea, seems dwarfed in one far corner. These black girls might best of all have belonged to the period which saw this house used for the assembly: the wide, full skirts, the spick-and-span aprons, the little shirred white caps, are a perfect survival of the past.

"Did you get any more dress patterns from Trinidad?" they ask Jeff, their sentences ending high in the air, making that Spanish name sound so completely British.

We gravitate to one corner where the view of the gardens and the point and blue sea is tantalizingly cut across by the green jalousies. The children are supposed to be having their tea upon the gallery, but our visit is too good an opportunity to miss, and they drag in their latest momentary favorite, some kind of wheeled vehicle, and come bringing the two big tomcats to Jeff, and the dog.

"George! Don't bother them. Doody!" Yet we can't disappoint the children by not showing great interest.

The planter himself now appears, putting down his khaki sun helmet and coming forward. He has been down at the dairy, he is so sorry to be late. Settling some trouble among the men, he explains; he laughs over it, but he is plainly annoyed. Glad that soon he is going away on a holiday, and yet apprehensive over what may happen while he is gone.

But tea is almost ready. The maid is bringing in delicious-looking cakes. We have almost forgotten that we wanted to telephone, if they don't mind.

"I'm not sure you'll get anyone," the planter says wryly. "Yesterday I had to untangle the wires myself. We couldn't get anywhere but the dairy."

"Ferrera was drunk again today, I do believe," his wife reports. Ferrera is the operator down in Mount St. George road, and has to "put us on" to Scarborough. This bores him excessively, for he runs a general store.

Today he is exceptionally alert when Jeff gives the name of her party. There is no answer, but the dusky town operator cuts in chattily. "I believe they've gone up to Roxborough," she tells Jeff. "A few minutes ago they passed by in their car. If you wait awhile I think you can get them at Richmond." It is like a small town, back home.

The table is full of delicious buttered scones, and toast in a silver rack. There are short pastries which melt in our mouth, and treacle, and pound cake. "If only we could teach Leotha to bake like this," we sigh.

"Oh, the cook is passable. But by the time she's trained, she'll decide to leave us. The turnover is amazing, you know."

This was not a trouble they had to contend with in the old days, when the slaves' barracks marched down the

slope below them. We had seen the loopholes for rifles in the old brick and stone foundations of the house—a precaution against a sudden insurrection. It was not quite that simple to protect themselves today. Yet weren't there plenty of advantages now? Our neighbors were not altogether certain. All the mechanics of civilization were only troublesome; and prices of copra and cocoa had dropped to rock bottom. Furthermore, they still had to contend with the fever. Yes, in this beautiful tropic paradise malaria continued to threaten them. At one time or another they all had been down with it. And the very climate we had sought as a restorative and an antidote to the cold and nerve-racking cities seemed to bode ill for the children. Days in their sickbeds had paled them too frequently.

What were the advantages? We had begun to wonder whether our reconstruction of the past had been altogether truthful, whether anyone had ever successfully coped with this tropical environment. The difference lay in this: a hundred years ago, London had been successfully transplanted to the Sugar Islands by people who had unlimited means. Today, although a thousand conveniences are at hand, the world of cities and commerce has stepped far ahead. The gap has widened.

In many ways it is a bounteous life, and even has its advantages for the children. Doody and George have their own donkey, and for awhile they often rode up to call on us. But that was prompted by their nurse, Clarice, who was trying to win Martin away from Leotha. Yet the boys are going to be separated from their family for six months when their parents presently sail for a holiday "at home," in England.

We talk about their forthcoming trip as we stay on,

reluctant to go and cordially urged by them not to. As dusk comes and we begin to hear the queer, churrumping sounds of the tiny frogs in the drains, our host gets up to make cocktails. Would we have a punch or just rum and bitters?

He is always urging his hospitality upon us. On the days when we go down to the bay for a "bathe," as they call it, he never fails to be there in his car to take us home, up the steep hill where the noonday sun is roasting. "I just had to come down to the dairy," he will say modestly. "You must stop at the house for a cocktail—just a spot." We all know that none of us is in the habit of taking rum before sunset, but his hospitality prompts him to make the offer, although it delays their eleven o'clock "breakfast"; they still keep to the old estate hours for meals. To them, too, we owe more than one trip. Busy as our friend is with his nine hundred acres, and his dairy, to boot, he has taken us on picnics and to parts of the island that we wouldn't otherwise have seen.

The very isolation which makes them glad to share these things entails closer ties within the family. And now they are going to be divided. Patsy, the oldest of the children, is sailing with them. Someday her brothers will follow; perhaps only to Trinidad until they are old enough for college, but then it will be England.

"We have to send Patsy away early," they tell us. "You see, the girls out here must leave when they're about twelve. They can't go to school with the blacks, naturally, and they need a more formal education than a governess can give them at home. The chances are, the boys won't see their sister again until she's a young lady. Probably she won't be back until she's at least eighteen."

"Won't she come home at all?"

"No, she'll spend her holidays with her grandmother or her aunt over there. If we can get away, we'll see her there. But it's expensive sending for her, especially with crop prices as they are now. And she can't travel alone, you know."

Both the mother and father hate the idea, but they are resigned to it; they accept the tradition more philosophically than most of the things that are wrong with this life. They have both done the same thing. The mother was born here, up at Merchiston, but the father had come out only occasionally with his family, who had other interests that were not in these islands. Perhaps he feels more keenly that he is bound to a self-imposed exile, hating it and yet liking it, too, as long as he can get away occasionally. For he has allowed himself to become a captive of his estate, and has to retreat to gray England for a holiday—an understandable but incongruous act to us.

We could not help recalling the words of that lady of quality, Miss Janet Schaw, who had also been told about children being sent away from the islands:

"They form their Sentiments in Britain, their early connections commence there, and they leave it just when they are at the age to enjoy it most, and return to their friends and country, as banished exiles; nor can any future connection cure them of the longing they have to return to Britain. Of this I see instances every day, and must attribute to that cause the numbers that leave this little paradise, and throw away vast sums of money in London, where they are either entirely overlooked or ridiculed for extravagance . . . while they neglect the cultivation of their plantations."



One day our friends took us with them to call at an estate near King's Bay. There, not twenty miles from Scarborough, with her beautiful home looking down upon the main road, lives a woman who might as well be thousands of miles away. She is one of the two whom the island calls duchesses.

The sun was setting as we drove past a magnificent flower garden, all blues and golds and white. And we stepped from a wide tropical veranda into a high-ceilinged room, the dull sheen of its paneled walls attractive and rich.

Yet the man and woman who greeted us might have been standing in a London drawing room. Their voices were restrained and clipped, and they spoke of new books which lay on those polished tables. There was an undeniable urbanity and charm about them and their house. And yet—almost a ludicrous element. The old fable of the tropics could not refrain from raising its head and breaking the dignity by an absurd suggestion. It was a part of that fable which we thought had long been relegated only to jokes and bad movies. For these two people had dressed for dinner. Not in evening clothes, it is true, but the planter looked as if he might have stepped out of Bond Street; and his wife wore the same dark, smart things, from her high-heeled pumps and sheer stockings to her black dress, that she would have worn on a London winter afternoon.

A white-clad butler lowered the swinging lamp, and lit it, before he served us cocktails. Only the three Sealyhams, scurrying unceremoniously about the slick floor, broke the unwonted formality.

This, we had to keep reminding ourselves, was the careless tropics, and the same Tobago where we went

everywhere in old shirts and shorts. Yet only the main impression was foreign; the walls were undeniably of the native blond cedar, and the wide-planked floors were of cypr. Even the furniture had been made here from Honduras mahogany.

The talk immediately became more familiar. The man was, after all, a planter. On many days he was away looking over his estates, and riding horseback across the Main Ridge to inaccessible Bloody Bay. He spoke of the ill-fated Producer's Co-operative Association, which had fallen upon evil days; spoke with authority, for he is always drafted for every exasperating committee or board of directors. With that faint cynicism most of the men have out here, he ridiculed our Studley Park friend's desire for an agricultural show. "The blacks won't learn," he said crisply. It had been argued that the display of fine produce might encourage them to raise better things themselves. He spoke entirely of exports, for he thought only in those terms. Nothing about what could be done within the island, now that world markets are failing them. He spoke as Sir William Young must have. Yet this man was born in the islands, of Scotch parents.

His wife was cool and reserved, and spoke only with fervor about his difficulties. She hated everything here, she seemed to say. Long ago she must have made up her mind to have nothing to do with the so-called island society, and build her life solely about this house. Every long day, while her husband was out and at work, she was left alone with her garden, and her books. A few years ago she had lost her only child; bitterness had swelled her dislike. She belonged in a different environment, in London.

Yet these planters, as they call themselves, are in no

sense farmers. The very word "estate" conveys a suggestion of difference. They are squires, landed gentry like those original grantees. In England they look upon the colonial with some contempt: bourgeois provincials, they say. In the States, we know a little better. What farmer up there would ever suggest cocktails—much less have the ingredients in his house? That very detail is strongly suggestive of the contrast between the two groups of people who live off the soil. These people are comparable only to the old-fashioned planters in our deep South.

Unconsciously Englishmen are tremendously affected by symbols and tradition. Let one of them put on a sun helmet, and immediately something happens to him. He becomes the lord and overseer. He orders his field laborers about as if they were still slaves, and likewise his house servants; and he damns the race when they quit him. He is an educated man, and it pleases him to be benevolent; but it would be unthinkable for him to be truly democratic.

They cannot be lumped together, these planters. If so, this account of estate life as we saw it would end right here. Yet we have sat on more than one gallery and heard the same discussions. The men do the talking. The children are running about, out of doors, hardly appreciating the freedom of this sunshine which they will forfeit for a traditional education. And the women, who bear the brunt of this tropical life, from whom we hear the tales of death and birth and despair and loneliness, go about quietly seeing that tea is served, as usual, although their firstborn may be down with the "fever."

As the English all over the world excel with their high

teas, the planters of Tobago specialize on picnics. They think nothing of setting off to some beach at a moment's notice, with a hamper full of tinned goods from which they make the most delectable vegetable salads, and desserts sweetened with coconut cream. When we sent our first order to Canning's before we were ensconced at Terry Hill, we scorned these tins. What could be more incongruous, we thought, than to live off them in the tropics?

We have changed our tune since then. For reasons of economy, we cannot be as prodigal as the residents. With imported cans at upward from a shilling, they are a definite luxury. Fresh vegetables, however, are hard to get; some planters raise their own produce, but there is not much to be bought in the market. And most of the carrots and "beetroot" which we must have shipped over from Trinidad arrive with long gray beards: they have been imported from the United States and Canada!

A few months ago we had the opportunity of seeing a really ambitious picnic in the grand old style, given by the Hamiltons. Even before the invitations for this event were sent out, on our daily walk down to their waterfall at the bottom of our road we had noticed that preparations were under way. The thick clumps of bamboo were being thinned out by burning; we could hear the crack and roar as the noble, towering stalks crashed down the ravine. Then one afternoon we found that the level space beside the pool had been cleared of brush, and two ingenious shacks of green, freshly cut palm leaves had been erected. The next day we understood why, and were petitioned for extra cocktail glasses.

By the time we arrived that Sunday a crowd had gathered beneath the bamboo, and our usually lonely

road was full of automobiles. The rains had ceased and the pool, a broad step between two falls, was clear enough for swimming. Guests from the hotel and a good part of the island society were on hand, but the atmosphere was far more informal, we were certain, than the masked ball the night before that had signaled the beginning of Lent. We undressed in the little palm shacks, which were really bathhouses for the men and women, and joined the bathers in the cool water.

A great buffet table had already been set up. White uniformed servants were running about offering long planter's punches or beer that had been kept cold in tubs of ice. Mr. Harry Hamilton, the picture of a robust Englishman, was officiating at the board; this was his wife's "holiday," he said, and he was obviously enjoying playing host, a part he rendered to perfection.

We admired the display of food. "Well, I thought I'd show all of you the way we used to do things." There was a touch of nostalgia in his voice, for he was probably thinking of the days when he owned our house and managed his Greenhill estate from near at hand.

His especial prize, which he lovingly carved himself, was a whole roast suckling pig, complete with an orange in its mouth. There was so much to eat, and we were urged to try all the salads, from potato to lobster. Fresh lobster, or rather, huge crayfish, which his men had caught from this same pool, as we had done. And of course, we must have some chicken pilau. And one of these kinds of cheese, and fruit—and another punch, or would we prefer beer now? What, no more? Certainly the bathe had given us a better appetite than that! And so we gorged ourselves.

Pilau is a favorite West Indian dish, although as you

know it is not native to these isles. From Mrs. Hamilton and other of the planters' wives Jeff has been collecting recipes. Probably you have your own way of making pilau, with rice and chicken as the main ingredients and a little bit of every sort of seasoning thrown in besides. But the pepper pot, which we later ate at the Crusoe, is a real dish of the islands, hot as any curry or chutney, which also are favored here, just as wherever the British and the tropics combine.

Unless you are old-fashioned enough to have a huge family and the prospects of double that number who may drop in unexpectedly for a meal, unless you like hot, rich food, and besides that have an old range out in the summer kitchen which is kept going day after day, the chances are you won't attempt this recipe; nevertheless, it is worth setting down:

The first requisite is a special "canaree," or pepper pot, of earthenware. Opinions differ whether any beef at all should be added, but on the whole varying recipes call for fowl, pre-eminently, and oxtail and cowheel; often pork and pig's trotters. All instructions are full of don't's: don't add stale meat that has been thickened with flour, without first washing it lightly in hot water; don't use flour at all; don't ever use an iron pot; don't add fish of any kind; don't stir it with spoons or forks that have been in other foods, and preferably use a special pair of wooden servers. To these meats, which must be brought slowly to a boil, add one tablespoon of casareep (concentrated juice of the bitter casava) to every cup of water, and season with onions, salt, red peppers (from which the seeds have been removed), mace, cloves, a good-sized piece of seasoning pork, and brown sugar. Allow this to simmer for four hours. Then remove from the stove and

allow to stand in a cool place uncovered. But at this point you have just begun, for the pepper pot is a kind of perpetual renewal, and has been known to have been replenished from time to time until it is a year or so old! Even conservative cooks say that it is best only after fourteen days. It must be boiled a few minutes every day to keep sweet, particularly when cold meats are added; but vegetables, along with fish, are taboo.

Until you have tried this dish, you may have your doubts, but you can certainly entertain none over its practicability for a large family, with everyone asking guests in for meals, and forgetting to tell mother. When they lived at Greenhill, Mrs. Hamilton told us, more than once it saved her great distress.

One of the American ladies was sitting next to us at the picnic as we talked about foods. "But how did you manage to get up provisions in those days before motor-cars?"

"Oh, that was no trouble at all. Do you see that old woman over there?" Mrs. Hamilton pointed to the black crone who had been serving us hot rolls. "That is our Princess Alexandria. She must be nearly eighty now. We sent her the seven miles into Scarborough."

"Not on foot?"

"Naturally. And one day my husband discovered she had come back without the meat. He told her to tell Cupid to hitch up the carriage and go back for it. But we had several Cupids, and she spoke to the wrong one, who refused to go. So she walked into town and back the second time. Yes, twenty-eight miles."

The American was struck dumb.

Those days, however, were yesterday, and no one realizes it better than the Hamiltons. For eight years



Princess Alexandria walked twenty-seven miles.





We were interlopers.



Todd, son of Solomon.

now they have been away from the gardens which we still enjoy, and the saman trees that Mr. Harry planted when he was a young bachelor, nearly forty years ago. They like to tell us how much finer everything was then; how many hundreds of grapefruit they picked from the trees, and the Julie mangoes—which still are not “full” as we write this—and the great house parties they had. Life, even without the modern fixtures, was eminently worth living, and few people seemed to have enjoyed themselves more thoroughly. They had tamed their part of the island, which had so long been in the family, to their own uses.

It is different today. When the cocoa became less profitable, they left their estate to start a hotel; now they lease the Crusoe, and Mrs. Hamilton is starting all over again on her gardens while she hospitably plans for an even bigger family of guests. The same story applies to the other two hotels, also run by estate managers, Bacolet and Speyside.

Life, perhaps, has degenerated since the more prosperous days; but now the prospect of more tourists has excited many of the planters, who are planning bungalows to rent during the winter season. It is a sad thing to see this less real industry springing up in such a fertile land. These days it is always easy to prophesy a new tourist mecca, and Tobago seems to be on the way; yet we wondered if this was to be the real fate of the island, and how remunerative it would be if all fifty or sixty white families would compete for its profits. And what would the twenty-five thousand blacks do? Look picturesque?

Up to windward, around Speyside, where every estate

house has a view of Bird of Paradise Island, they like to say the blacks are a "different breed." Certainly there is a life and a society all its own, and even now we find the planters more self-contained than those closer to Scarborough. Only once a month, on its round-the-island voyage, does a coastal steamer put into those upper bays to take away produce and deposit supplies.

Forty years ago a young man from Barbados chose a homesite there. Other planters had taken the acres which rose gently from the sands. But his instinctive love of beauty, even at the time when he was most intent upon clearing and planting, must have dictated the wind-swept hill he chose. Perhaps he had already heard about or discovered the remains of the great house where my lady Merchiston once lived so grandly; at least he finally found that grave among the cabbage palms—which told the story of the young man who took a chill after a dance—and one day he dug up several buttons from the coat of our lady's coachman.

It must have been a hard climb up the winding road for two horses and that springless but no doubt elegant carriage, for Merchiston is the highest estate on the island, nine hundred feet directly above the sea. When we went there to call, before these people came down to Studley Park to look after their grandchildren while our friends went to England, we saw an old photograph of this young man standing beside his first house, a lean-to made from bush material.

Although he knows by heart every acre of his cocoa and the coconuts down by the beach, undoubtedly when he first began clearing the end of that narrow ridge, began building his house which has seen merely paint and a few additions since, when he brought his bride

out here, right then he yearned to paint the scene that stretched out below him and off to distant ridges.

From their rose garden that afternoon, beside a frangipani tree that has been stunted by the trades blowing hard and cool on this eminence, he pointed out King's Bay to us. The perfect land-locked harbor lay shining like some secret pool at our feet. Its farther protecting point was only the first of a score of those knifelike ridges, cut by all the little mountain streams, which indeed run down like so many ribs from the spine of our lizard of an island. Inland, to our right, the Main Ridge itself towers, a series of dark green humps rolling off into low-hanging purple clouds. With the golden sun in our eyes, the effect was all of light and shade, but in the mornings the color is a clear green above the blue sea.

This planter's house and his acreage are small, yet he seems to have the world, or at least the greatest part of the island, before his eyes. And so, a good many years ago, he began painting. Other planters have hobbies of their own; some like tinkering with their cars, which is a necessity as well as a recreation, others are fond of history or books or collecting antiques. But this man finds a greater pleasure in his meticulous water colors. Some New York art dealer will eventually discover them, for they are painted like old drawings, and often seem to us reminiscent of Currier and Ives prints.

Perhaps he and his wife are not so self-sufficient as Robinson Crusoe, but we had the impression that most things they could do for themselves. His wife, who gave birth to four or more children here on this hilltop, is an energetic person and has a remarkably youthful appearance. From her Jeff learned how to make mango chutney and calalu soup and how to prepare crab-backs. Her

cookbook was a mixture of recipes, to which she and her mother had added their own, and directions for making seidlitz powders and yeast; how to take stains from linen and prepare wax for floors and chairs. As she served us with a fine liqueur of rum and lime which she had made with infinite pains, we learned that not only does she sew dresses for herself and her married daughters, but her husband's everyday suits—and no tailor would have scorned their cut. We were not surprised, then, when she showed us, along with fruits and an ebony tree, another which they called “clean teeth.” The blacks use twigs from this for toothbrushes, and the cook came out, with many giggles, to show how she broke off a piece, stamped the end upon a stone, and thereby had a quite usable brush.

It was typical of these people that they should have, on one of the rosebushes sheltered by a wing of the house, a nest with two baby hummingbirds rocking in it. By then the children were growing a little large for their cradle; it was not much bigger than an eyeglass. A little later, they have since told us, one of the birds was forced to sit on the edge, and one morning they were gone. Until that time their mother had complacently sat on a branch near by, when she was not away fetching small insects for their dinner.

It was at Merchiston that we began to feel the harmony which can surround an estate here in the tropics, when people have found what they want and are content. Their sons and daughters have married, or are old enough to work for themselves. And with their little Austin car they are no longer isolated. In the old days, when there were large house parties, they say it was more fun. They would not relive, however, the tragedies of their earlier life, when their young son was stricken with in-

fantile paralysis; with no doctor who in those days could diagnose the disease, they had put a baby sister into his bed for company. By a miracle, she escaped the same illness.

Longing for a past epoch solves nothing; we do not mean to imply that it possibly could. Only, the past is certain and the future so very doubtful. Perhaps the children of this couple will never know even the satisfaction of being self-sufficient.

The sun appears to enter more brightly into the lives of another family we have come to know. Yet there is every reason why they should have been defeated by their environment. For thirty years the mother and father have lived up at Caledonia, the remote estate which branches off from the trail up to the Main Ridge. The father was forced to give up his position with the Royal Mail Line because of his eyesight, and they settled here to grow rubber. For a syndicate of men who were interested, in the early years of this century he traveled through Mexico and South America, studying methods and species of the plant. But it was a story of failure. Now his three hundred acres of cocoa bring him little enough. Throughout those years, except for a short period in Venezuela, they have remained to themselves, cut off even from Scarborough. To this day they have no car.

A year ago their daughter married and moved to Grafton estate, just below Plymouth; the house overlooks the town at Great Courland Bay. But now, a year later, she courageously manages the estate alone. For her young husband died last fall. More tragedies than pretty stories haunt this tropic island. And yet

this young woman and her family have shown us the most satisfying times we have had on any of the estates.

It is a feeling, and an especial attitude on their part, more than anything else. As such, it is ephemeral; you would almost have to meet them to understand. Their surroundings, however, do express their personalities, reflecting their deep appreciation of this island. The cheerfulness they manage to convey and share with us is hardly our kind, nor would it probably be yours; we are too—beset, may be the word. Beset and worried and hurried by a world with a thousand and one things to be done.

First, it was the house at Grafton: the most sparkling of any we have seen here. It is so full of light and air, set to catch the trade winds that blow down from the Ridge. The faint pink plaster walls blend harmoniously with soft green jalousies at the bay windows of this great house—too great, now, except when her mother and father and younger sister come. Against this green, at her bedroom window, she has trained the rare McLean bougainvillea whose flowers are peach and sherry tones. The terrace in front, level with the tops of rustling palms on the hillside, affords a wide view of the sea, from Buccoo Reef to that toy village of Plymouth. About the coral stone steps of the terrace are rosebushes and the chartreuse and maroon leaves of the velvet coleus, which we have helped to plant.

There is never a stray dog or cat that does not find a home here; even Skippy, the donkey, nonchalantly clatters up the steps and drinks water from the flower bowls until his mistress feeds him crackers. And the last time they came to call on us, they brought a little red fawn with them, Rosalind's new pet.

Rosalind is the youngest daughter, just eleven. And

probably she embodies everything which we want to convey about this family. She is petite and thin, but tanned, and always in shorts. Her big brown eyes sparkle at us from under her short straw-blond hair—a lovely child. They showed us a snapshot of her and the middle sister, who is now in an English school. They were lying on the backs of their ponies, which were cooling off in the middle of a stream; ferns and extravagant tropical foliage enclosed them.

No artist could have caught her in a more characteristic pose. For she is a wild thing, almost a part of nature. She is as unaffected, consequently, as the island's beauty. Her youth is a part of her charm, but her knowledge of everything that grows, from the vegetables she raises in the split bamboos to the most unusual wild flower, is quite adult.

The first time we were all together at Grafton they took us down the steep hill to their own beach. A long expanse of perfect sand was shadowed by great palms. The waves broke heavily upon a massive pile of rocks, between which were gentle pools, warm and no larger than a bathtub.

"But, where's Rosalind?" we asked.

"Oh, she'll be along," they said casually.

Suddenly we heard her high little voice and saw her, galloping down the beach astride the bare back of a handsome chestnut stallion. Her turned-up panama hat, fastened by a ribbon under her chin, almost hid that small face. The horse bore her away down the beach, its hoofs cutting deep into the sand, while she rode him like a centaur. And another time we watched her charging down the road. Suddenly she came upon a group of blacks strung across her path. With her small hands she pulled the horse up sharply onto its hind legs, right



above those frightened Negroes. All about the countryside they think of her awesomely as a kind of small goddess.

Yet in another year or so she will have to be packed off to school. "It's so difficult to find a good teacher," her mother told us. "And she has no playmates her own age, which isn't right."

Instinctively, we wanted to say, Why? Why must she go away? What could a dismal school with routine lessons, in a gray country, do for this natural child? Why turn her into just another well-bred Englishwoman, when she is already becoming that phenomenon, an individual? For the tropics have given her all the energy, the interest in life, which it seems to withhold from so many.

She is, pre-eminently, a tribute to her mother and father who have brought her up, teaching her what is fine about this island, and speaking to her not as a child but as one of them. We want to know the woman she becomes ten years from now; whether we are right in thinking this family has gained the most from their environment.

Always, the father has talked with unstinted enthusiasm about Tobago. When so many planters who have fared better than he were complaining about low prices and hard times, it was beyond us how he retained this cheerful demeanor. One night, as he and his older daughter were driving us home by moonlight in her car, we spoke sympathetically about the lot of all of them.

He laughed—he is a white-haired man, and has seen many a year of changing prices. "I've seen bad times before," he answered casually. "And we wouldn't be farmers, would we, if we didn't grouse?"

## *Village Wedding*

THERE must have been more than a hundred Negroes swarming around that new, unpainted frame house which overlooked the blue sea from its knoll. Like a swarm of bees they buzzed and clustered and overlapped, forming constantly new and varying similar patterns about this just-discovered hive. Up and down the steep steps, in and out of that door from the gabled stoop, little boys pranced, their thin legs twinkling in the hot sun, in a travesty of the businesslike preparations of their elders. They ran about the cement pillars which lifted the toy cottage upon stilts, they screamed, they strutted to the music, affected as all little children are by excitement and the pomp and circumstance of any Event.

They were no different from the older ones. That was what we could not help thinking. Oh, there was a solemnity, right enough. The elders were in all their finery, they were busy cooking in the cookhouse, setting the table for the wedding feast on the long boards beneath the cottage. Yet now and then as the band inside lay into a hot passage, one of those crones—in her madras kerchief, with her sagging breasts beneath a starched mother hubbard, with those wrinkles of age and wisdom upon her brown face—suddenly, from a sedate walk, would break into a dance. Swinging and swaying, her body inclined backward, her arms up and waving. It was

almost embarrassing to look upon old age cavorting. The sudden gesture was so unconscious, so unpremeditated, unwilling, insistent. Like the children.

As we stood there, the only white faces among all the shades of brown, from black to ivory, we reconstructed our metaphor about the bees. No, that analogy was not good. Bees displayed purpose. So did these people, but differently; they were children dressed up and playing at purpose, following the gestures and the acts of their betters, oversolemnizing the occasion. Except when, like the crone, they occasionally gave themselves away.

No, it is better to say they were like weeds. Taking the place, the island, their strength through their endless propagation, the strength of a race as a whole. Undirected, consuming, yet enriching the land that lies fallow. And, if you looked upon them without prejudice, possessing the wild beauty of all weeds in flower.

The colors were bright on that tropic afternoon, like their own skins against those pastel colors they use so violently. And unrestrained as their movements, though their attitudes were dignified; and the privileged ones, the best friends of the groom who had built this house for his bride, showed too plainly their superiority as they advanced carrying lace doilies and crocheted spreads and embroidered pillows, as they hung out of the windows, relishing their exclusive position. The wind blew soft and refreshing; but it whipped up the parched earth before the house where no grass yet grew, dusting the pink oleanders and the red hibiscus, and the croton; brought to us the smells of the cookhouse stove, the sweat of their leisurely hurrying bodies.

We began to feel uncomfortable. We were intruders.

Not that we seemed to disturb them by our presence. But it was their life and we had nothing to do with it. We thought we could understand it, but we interpreted from our own standards, our own perspective. Actually, we were not initiate, could never be. Far from having the right to condescend, we were barred from them as much as they from us. Perhaps we hadn't thought about it in that manner before. . . .

We had accepted the invitation enthusiastically; it had seemed like a fine idea when Leonora Solomon had sent us her note: "Sir and Madam, I am going to have a wedding on Saturday is there any objective of inviting Mister and Mistress Bowman to take the picture and admire our West Indies wedding. If there is any objective I cordially invite Sir and Madam to the Residence of their Son Ermine Solomon who is the Scout Master of 6th Tobago Troop." As usual, Leonora was confused on several points. Ermine was the son of her aunt and uncle; we could not claim a black man as old as ourselves, and an important personage in Mount St. George. His prestige was furthered, too, as the teacher in the Methodist school.

Early on this hot Saturday afternoon Cicily came for us to be our guide. The wedding itself was to take place at Bethel village, not far from the Tower, so that we were really to see only the reception. It was an especial event because the blacks do not often marry—at least until they have several children. Even the planters tacitly approve this custom, for both parties are more amenable in the unwedded state: the man is not sure of his woman, and she is more likely to cook and provide his comforts because she has not yet completely won him. In this fashion Cicily, who is Leonora's oldest

daughter, was already "married," although she is scarcely fifteen. She still has the high-hipped build of a little girl, and on that afternoon we followed her down the road, watching her long black shanks spindling out from beneath a short, tight-fitting dress of the brightest pink.

She did not need to guide us, for the whole village had congregated at the house, and we could hear the music even as we came to the first shack of the village. The little boys and their curious older brothers gawked from the dusty path, leaning on their bicycles and laughing. They stared at us.

We didn't know exactly what to do with ourselves. Cicily had vanished, Leonora was nowhere to be seen, and Martin and Leotha had gone to Bethel; they would arrive with the wedding party. But we had come to photograph, and we busied ourselves that way. Evidently Leonora had not spread the word, for some of the older women giggled and hid their heads, and the little boys would not stand still. Two or three of them were busy under the house, churning the ice-cream freezers. On the long tables were two elaborate cakes which we later found were only for show this day, and would not be cut until the marriage was consummated.

Out under the cassia trees blue smoke curled from the door of the cookhouse. An enormously fat woman was stirring a great kettle that contained rice and chicken. These were the relatives, who lived in the house of the groom's mother, right beside the new one. They had been cooks in the great houses, and talked to us with deference and shyness.

We began to see them as individuals, and we remembered Bryan Edwards and his classifications. Yet the types had fused; it was now more the old slave and the

new upstart. The ones who still wore kerchiefs and those who sartorially imitated the whites: their dress reflected their attitude. These latter sat in the cool, dark shade, talking primly like ladies at a church social. Again it was that exaggerated solemnity, that primness—that genteel manner the Negro acquires when he responds to the surface-culture of our own race. And yet, the wild music, not at all like that sterile band on Christmas Eve. In their speech they preserved the expressions of yesterday, yet there was no archaistic flavor. They were the timeless ones, the strong weeds instead of the fading domesticated flowers. And this was their village; even in 1763 Mount St. George had been reserved for “poor settlers.” A bad village, the whites call it, because it has always resisted with that black stubbornness and evasiveness which is not distinguishable in result from a willed independence.

Cicily came for us and shyly asked if we would like to see the house. From the outside it possessed a strange, incongruous quality: the solidity of those cement pillars upheld such a slight frame cubicle, which looked all the more jerrybuilt for its gingerbread trim about the eaves and windows. Yet it was modeled after the planters’ residences; there was no real difference. Also, it was a token that the slave barracks were forever gone, that each had become an individual. How much of a one, we wondered, and how powerful was their racial consciousness?

In the tiny hall which opened onto the stoop the five musicians had squeezed themselves, with trap drum, bass viol, banjo, ukelele and clarinet. Our entrance seemed to be a signal to recommence the music, which deafened us in those close quarters. The little parlor in this house-

on-stilts was cluttered with highly varnished furniture. A doily embroidered with red and orange butterflies lay beneath a bright blue vase that held a bunch of scarlet hibiscus. There were wedding presents of fancy towels and more colored glass vases. And the walls were decorated with magazine advertisements of beautiful blonde maidens in bathing suits, and Ermine's certificate as Scout master. We peeked through into the other room, just large enough to hold a massive brass bed, covered with a great canopy of mosquito netting that had been edged with crude lace. The whole plan could not have exceeded fifteen feet on a side, and was further crowded so that we could hardly enter by the posteriors of the privileged ones who lolled out the windows.

It was new and clean and yet hideous, with that same attempt at "genteelity." Not that the older shacks of the village were better because they were picturesque; but how much of this was their instinctive idea, how much their effort to copy? And what else could they do? They had been transplanted two centuries ago from equatorial Africa, as the breadfruit had been brought from Tahiti, the samans from Ceylon, the bamboo palms from Madagascar. . . .

Suddenly the orchestra stopped and everyone began rushing outside. We escaped and took up a commanding position on the top step of the mother's house. From the winding road below we heard the incessant honking of the taxis as they brought the wedding party.

The bride stepped out of the first car, her face dark against her white gown. The dust of the road settled, and the groom emerged, a very solemn-faced man complete in morning coat, wing collar and top hat! His eyes were hidden behind gold-rimmed spectacles. From

behind the bridesmaids and ushers poured forth. Was this Harlem or Tobago?

They were waiting for something on the road. We strained to see over the heads of the black crowd. Now the groom was holding a black umbrella over his mate, and speaking querulously to someone. The bride was dabbing her eyes with a filmy handkerchief, for it is the custom to weep on such an occasion. A little boy brought them a glass of water and the bride, her hands full of the bouquet, had to be aided. But not even then did they advance, and the groom sent up word that he did not want us, please, to take pictures now. He looked impatient and troubled and indignant. A little sharply, he motioned for the musicians to come stand in front of the line that was forming, crowded in by the cars, the onlookers and the shrubbery.

At last his Scout troop arrived, the boys sweating in their khaki shorts and heavy wool socks. With a great deal of confusion they pushed the people aside and formed an arch with their long yellow bamboo poles.

Suddenly the band struck up a tune, and the party began to advance, the whole group swinging into a cake-walk in time to the rowdy music. They were all dressed fit to kill. Great floppy picture hats wobbled on the girls' heads, and their sleazy silk dresses dragged in the dust, while they held on to their escorts' arms with their lace gloves. They were going to dance around the two houses. Someone started to throw rice, and the ushers doused them back with a vile toilet water which made our clothes smell for days.

Round and round they danced, shouting now and throwing their heads back, the men sweating under their heavy dark suits, the girls teetering on their high heels,



the moisture staining the backs of their dresses. It was wild, it was barbaric, it was like Harlem, like the deep South—like anything at all but this tropic setting. And as they finally pranced up those narrow steps, still in time, and disappeared into that tiny house—crowding it as in one of those fantastic animated cartoons—the shouts rose louder and the stomping seemed to shake those thin clapboard walls.

One little boy, solemn as an owl, stood perfectly motionless at the foot of the steps, guarding a large box. He is a part of every black wedding. It is the custom for the males to rent their top hats and morning coats from a shop in town. And in a few moments this kill-joy would denude them of their borrowed finery.

But now Leotha, dressed in her new green silk gown and her picture hat, was with us, and Leonora. We did not recognize Mistress Solomon. A trailing, salmon-colored sheath of satin had replaced that dirty old shift, and her pigtails were for once unbraided and billowing out of a coarse black net. We felt more easy, but when a dignified old man in a gray suit and a wing collar asked if we would like some ice-cream and cake, we thought it best to refuse. We were, after all, intruders; we did not belong here. Inside they were beginning to get drunk, and that always means trouble. If the party would come out and be photographed, we would leave.

Leonora looked confused, but Leotha volunteered to take in our message. She came out giggling behind her hand.

“De partners and de gals, dey have no great objection,” she reported between convulsions. “But de bride, she ain’t feelin’ jes’ bright.”

We were nonplused. After all, we had supposedly been invited to be the official photographers. A little impatiently, we pressed Leotha for a reason.

“De bride is pregnant, madam.”

As she uttered the words, down the steps again came the wedding party, the bride and groom in the lead. Quickly the Scouts formed another arch. And there was no doubting Leotha. We were fearful that the heir presumptive might yet be present at the wedding feast. . . .

## *Cocoa and Coconuts*

ONE day we had come from the beach and were talking with our friend at his cocoa house, down in the palm grove. He was engaged in his usual peculiar task of begging several black men to work for a living.

One old man was paying no attention at all to his pleading. His rheumy eyes were hypnotized by a piece of corrugated iron, lying on the ground. Finally he broke in, "Boss, you want dat piece of galvanize?"

"What? What are you talking about, man?"

"Maybe I could buy dat galvanize, Boss?"

"We'll see. Are you going to work today, Titus?"

"No, can't today, boss. . . . Dat galvanize—"

"Oh, all right, take it. But you work tomorrow, hear?"

"Yes, boss." And the happy man sneaked away with his galvanize—free.

The planter turned to us and shrugged. "And I have cocoa, rotting on my trees," he said with remarkable restraint.

We remembered that day back in February when he had told us that the price of cocoa had dropped again. Now the planters were receiving only five dollars per fanega—

an old Spanish measure of one hundred and ten pounds. In the 'twenties, the price was twenty-five dollars.

It was a good thing our friend had only part of his estate in cocoa, and that his model dairy had become so profitable a venture. "I'd sell every acre of cocoa if I could find a buyer crazy enough to take over," he has told us again and again.

But there are other planters who are less fortunate, who have nothing but cocoa. "And it can't be raised profitably at less than twice the present price," they say.

Was this the handwriting on the wall? Was cocoa going the way sugar had gone, a hundred years before? Although cocoa is a comparatively new crop in Tobago, we found that in December, 1664, a Sir William Beeston wrote in his journal, "About this day appeared, first, the comet which was the forerunner of the blasting cacao trees, after which they generally failed in Jamaica, Cuba and Hispaniola." Many accounts refer to the sudden blighting of the crop, and a Jesuit priest went so far as to claim that Trinidad's trees became barren because the planters did not pay their tithes. After these ravages and disasters, however, the inhabitants of Trinidad began planting cocoa again on a large scale in 1756. Our old friend Bryan Edwards spoke of this same fatal conjunction of the comets, but remarked that most of the production was delegated to the Spanish, as London imposed a very heavy excise upon the "cakes." He understood that chocolate had some nutritive value.

Cocoa is still king in Tobago, although perhaps a sorry one. Despite the palm groves that fringe the shores and the lowlands reaching to Pigeon Point, the hills and ravines dictate the crop. We cannot go a step from the house that we are not aware of this. It is not only that

we see those great valleys and have seen them in coral blossom, shading the low trees; rather, the smell pervades the air, for this is still the picking season. It is not an odor which bears any relation to chocolate, however, but a damp fermenting smell. In the early mornings or the late, yellow afternoons when we go down to the waterfall, we are sure to meet scores of blacks who are bound to or from the groves above Greenhill, or Brothersfield, which now belongs to Studley Park estate. At the end of the day, their plodding donkeys are heavy with sacks of the sickly-sweet beans, culled from the pods.

Some of them own their land, or have been given a few acres by a planter on contract. Under this system the black peasant plants his trees, always twelve feet apart so that there are about three hundred to an acre, but leaving room for a provision garden which will support him and his family for the five or six years until the trees begin to bear.

Whatever the arrangement, the process and the complications of measures has just begun. The donkeys are able to carry two seventy-pound baskets of wet cocoa, which when dried or cured are put into sacks weighing a hundred and sixty-five pounds. But the price quoted in the newspaper and at the commission houses is in fanegas, so that two sacks equal three fanegas. The reasons for this chaotic set of figures, if there ever were any at all, are lost back in history.

Picking is the best-paid job. One man can gather about one basket a day, although it depends on how many trees he must strip of pods, and how fast he works. Besides, cocoa trees are the most erratic in the world. Out of an acre of them, probably two-thirds will not bear at all in any one year. When the black appears with his



A sorry king silhouettes our waterfall.



If the planters all had copra!

basket, the overseer at the cocoa house will measure or judge the weight, to see that the estate is receiving full value, and pays the man anywhere from a shilling to one and eight—twenty-four to forty cents.

From this you can estimate roughly how much a black could make during the possible eight months of the crop. Suppose, theoretically, that he was able and willing to work five days a week at an average of thirty cents, during all that time. At the best, his income would therefore be about forty-eight dollars a year.

Out of season, he can take his time over pruning a task of a hundred trees, for which he is paid from sixty to eighty cents; the planter knows each field as if it were the palm of his hand, and he or his overseer remembers every drain, every hillock, and almost the condition of every tree, so that the price is based upon experience. Brushing about the trees, to keep the vegetation down so as not to choke the growth, brings about thirty or forty cents for the same area.

Almost all work is done by the task, we soon found from the planters' conversations. If they pay by the day, their black worker will frankly acknowledge that he will not labor as well. "Have to work *all* day," he explains logically. Whereas if he is assigned a task, even the slowest worker can do it in half a day, and be finished by very early afternoon, so that he can spend the remaining hours taking his ease.

"It's a rare black," the planters say, "that will perform more than one task in a day. Why, we have our troubles getting them out at all. You see, they can live on three dollars a month, with their provision gardens. . . ."

Still, a few turn up with their baskets and donkeys, and the loads are deposited in a kind of wooden bin,



where it is "sweated." We have often poked our noses into these ovens down at Studley Park and been nearly overcome with the stench and the heat. The mere conjunction of thousands of pounds of beans, packed down and constantly turned, generates this high temperature as the excess mucus is oxidized. In a week the beans are ready to be spread out in elevated trays, under the tropical sun.

Ever since the night we attended the Christmas Eve party we had heard about "dancing the cocoa." It was a provocative term, and our friend at Studley Park promised us this sight when there was a great lot to be danced. When we passed by the sheds on our way up from the beach we would watch to see if the cocoa was out drying yet. The trays are in a sort of attic, from which the galvanize roof may be rolled back, so that they are exposed to the sun during the daytime, and quickly covered again if rain clouds loom in sight. Everywhere on the island are these sheds, and even over in Port-of-Spain, behind our bank, there are the same trays.

Finally came a good day. We mounted to the now flat roof where an old woman and a few young boys, barefoot, were walking back and forth, plowing through the rows of beans, turning them over as they shuffled. This was preliminary to the dance, and a last effort to make sure they were quite dry. When the beans are taken out of the pods they are white and gooey; part of this sticky outer coating is washed away with a concoction made up of water and bush herbs, especially the leaves of the trumpet tree. By the time they have been baked in the ovens they have turned a delicious reddish-brown.

Three or four men were standing ready while the

helpers scooped the beans into small round heaps with special wooden shovels. The piles were sprinkled with a curious broth of limes and herbs and orange rinds. Then the dance began, and those weird chants, as they began to shuffle around in a circle, polishing the beans with their bare feet until they shone, swinging their arms and mumbling over and over again their favorite tunes, while the old woman kept brushing the beans toward the center, and a young boy shoveled.

There are especial songs for dancing the cocoa, some of them time-honored, and most of them thoroughly ribald. When we attempted to catch the words, our planter friend became embarrassed, and would not translate—for the black dancers were harder to understand than Martin or Leotha. One of the songs, more innocuous than the rest, was about a Grenada gal:

“Oh, Grenada gal don’ want no money,  
Grenada gal don’ want no money  
She don’ want no money. . . .  
Grenada gal don’ want no lovin’  
Don’ want no lovin’  
Grenada gal don’ want no pleasure  
She don’ want no lovin’  
She don’ want no pleasure. . . .”

And on and on, repeated with the same monotony that marked their slow, swinging steps. Their heads against the backdrop of palms and sky, their apelike faces contorted as they sang, it was little wonder that their boss, who sat sternly watching from under his sun helmet, viewed them with obvious scorn and dissatisfaction. He knew they would not do any more work that day; half an hour’s labor would bring them a threepence for dancing

one heap, and usually they could not be prevailed upon to do a real task. If it were not for the songs, they would probably not have turned out to dance. Occasionally, they are given rum to incite them to a better job, for on the dancing largely depends the quality and sale price of the cocoa.

We listened attentively, startled by their unexpected shouts which interspersed the stanzas. Most of the songs were a mere jumble of syllables with no words or sense, dating back to slave days. Another recalled the war:

“You know what Kitchener say,  
De times are gettin’ hard  
But hope and charity  
Will conquer Germany.  
Kaiser William, blow yo’ horn. . . .”

As we drove up the hill with our friend he commented laconically on the blacks as laborers. This day he was merely amused; other times he has been infuriated in his self-contained way, exasperated beyond words. He drove us on up to Terry Hill and we sat talking while Martin prepared cocktails. “You’ve no idea,” he said, “the innumerable quarrels I have to settle. For one thing, my black overseer is always picking a fight with the Hindu who looks after the cows—it’s best to hire an East Indian for that, you know. It all usually starts over the pay table, because the Hindu resents his fortnight’s wages being dealt out by a real black man. But that’s an unusual situation here in Tobago.” Far more typical, he went on, were the disputes between man and wife. More than once this planter had actually wrested a knife from one or the other, and had sent wives away.

"Or they decide to go themselves, and then there's trouble, too. One of them went to visit her relatives up at Charlotteville, and left another woman to do her husband's cooking. Well, naturally, when she returned home . . . I told her, What did she expect?" He was always having to act the judge in cases like this, and to decide matters of seniority and precedence, jurisdiction over tasks, complaints of spite, and smooth over insults, hurt pride and everything and anything else. "The list is endless," he ended with irritation. "And since the 'unrest' we've had to pay them more—in the face of this drop in prices."

To all intents and purposes, cocoa obviously does not pay. Most of the planters' irritation over the blacks seems merely a by-product of their concern over their reduced incomes, which have been more than quartered. We were quite ready to believe them, quite ready to state in this book that Tobago has seen its best days and perhaps its last, that the island paradise is useful only as a pleasant place to live—provided you have an outside income. Yet no one seemed to be starving to death. Most of these families had cars; they gave expensive picnics; they took holidays in England and sent their children there to school. We were not so much skeptical, however, as curious. They complained about high wages, but we couldn't consider them so. We began to ask specific questions.

Not long ago, we rechecked the figures we'd already gathered with the owner of Merchiston. This is a small estate but the costs remain the same, in proportion. And bear in mind that most of the estates run into many hundreds of acres. Few of them have less than the standard three hundred.

Our informant brought out an old ledger which he had kept for the forty-odd years he has lived here. These are the actual figures, given us by this planter. They check well with the others, and tell more than dozens of words. A decade ago, prices were soaring. Then came the fatal 'twenty-nine, which affected Tobago like us all, and seven years of bad prices. But the Bible was wrong; the lean years were not to be followed by as many good ones, evidently:

<i>Season</i>	<i>Cost of picking &amp; curing, per bag (165 lbs.)</i>	<i>Sale price per fanega (110 lbs.)</i>	<i>Net profit per acre</i>
1934-35	\$1.61	\$ 5.95	\$29.26
1935-36	1.57	6.62	33.44
1936-37	1.75	13.21	72.26
1937-38	? (about)	5.00	?

The labor costs did not look prohibitive with those figures. And if you multiply the profit by three hundred acres, there appears to be a substantial income; even in lean years, almost ten thousand dollars. We looked at our figures again. Freight to Trinidad and commission to the brokers had been deducted from the sale price. And the tax amounts to only a shilling an acre, cultivated land or not.

Over a forty-year period, this planter told us, the sale price had been \$11.50 per fanega, nearly twice the amount for all but that one year when the crop was small. Was that the secret? It seemed to us, reluctant as we are to make such a statement, that the planter, who most vividly remembers when the price was twenty-five dollars, is spoiled. His standard of living and his scale of values belong to another time.

At this point, Jeff grew disgusted. "It's hard enough to keep my grocery accounts straight," she admitted, "without figuring out these things. It doesn't make sense."

We wondered if we had not been told the whole story. What other factors were there? Depreciation hardly entered in; those old sheds which housed the cocoa had no value. We were not trained sociologists and economists, nor attempted to be, but we had these figures given to us by the same men who shook their heads sadly.

There was no doubt that cocoa was suffering in Trinidad. A frightful disease called witchbroom has covered the trees there and destroyed many a crop. Just the same, the infected pods must be picked, and often half the labor goes for no purpose but to keep the blight from spreading further. Every day there is some article in the *Guardian*; some report of an agricultural expert who has been investigating all South America for a resistant species; some protest by the growers; some pleading for an enlarged government subsidy, like our own AAA, which for the last three years has added, at one cent a pound, a little over a dollar to the sale price. And a few days ago came an editorial entitled "A Grave Situation": "The plain facts are . . . that the cocoa industry, upon which . . . some 100,000 people are directly or indirectly dependent, is in danger of being destroyed by the ruinous prices now prevailing. . . . At the close of the present crop a number of estates will suspend operations. . . . But, though we do not wish to appear pessimistic, the possibility of another failure must be faced . . . this crop will have to be continued for lack of something better. . . ."

It would be easy for us to cry doom, and as our friend

from Caledonia said, the planters always grouse. But there is the answer of a better informed source than any other.

Cocoa seems somehow or other to be less romantic than coconut palms, possibly because of the same old associations with the tropics; besides, chocolate is such a cold-weather nutriment it is hard to realize it must be grown near the equator.

Although they speak in the same breath about cocoa and copra, the largest plantations are in coconut palms from which the copra is derived, and this product has not failed to the same degree. (Some way, these palms were first named cocoa-nuts, but that spelling is too confusing for these islands.)

In the first place, copra is a simple crop to harvest. Two men, picking steadily the year around, can gather nuts from several hundred acres. The groves should be brushed and drained, but nothing happens to the trees, unlike the cocoa, if they are neglected. The nuts can even be allowed to fall, in the true tradition of our tropical fable. As a matter of fact, a better quality of copra is extracted from those that have ripened rather than been picked green—provided always that the fallen nuts are not stolen, and people can be found to drag themselves through the uncleared bush to harvest them.

The second day we were on the island, even before we had seen Terry Hill, we walked down the road to watch the nuts being picked. With a long belt about his waist, and extending around the trunk, the black man hopped up even the straightest palm like a monkey, doubling his knees and shoving, then pulling his belt higher, and so on, until he reached the lowest bunch of nuts, which he whacked down with his wicked cutlass.

Palm trees are planted in very definite rows, and any way you look, there will be straight lines, alleviated by the varying angles of upward growth. Like cocoa trees, there is a rule that palms grow best at a special number to the acre—in this case, seventy.

More optimistic planters say that they annually average seventy nuts to a tree, and individual trees have yielded two hundred and more. They must be picked to bear well, but the yield varies with the soil and the exposure. Palms should have plenty of water, and seem to grow best on the very edge of a sandy beach; on the hillside, water flows off too fast, and they are stunted or less productive. And after a palm reaches fifty years, its yield falls off rapidly.

If the planter is lucky he will have men picking every day, for the ripe nuts from each tree are gathered every four months. A task here is half a crown, sixty cents, for a thousand nuts, with five per cent off for too-green ones. For two cents a hundred, a little boy gathers the nuts from the ground where the pickers have thrown them and brings them in to the splitters.

A splitter is not nearly so well paid, but to watch him sends cold shivers down our spines. With the coconut held casually in his left hand, he swipes at it with his heavy sharp cutlass, tosses it up and one-third around, splits again, and once again—and there are few casualties. Then women take out the meat, the copra, and this is placed on roofs to dry in much the same way as the cocoa beans. The oily smell is rather pleasant in the open air, but pity on you if your ship is loaded with the stuff!

We have tried to figure out the net profit per acre for coconut estates, too. But although there are certain rules



of thumb, and we know that three nuts usually make one pound of copra; that the labor costs are perhaps four dollars a year per acre; that taxes, freight, commissions and overseers add up to so much more—despite these figures, it is hard to arrive at a reliable, theoretical profit because the yield varies. One man says he averages seventy nuts to a tree, another says thirty. But in Ceylon that latter figure is the average, and Tobago fares much better, and has no palm beetles to make life miserable. It is safe to say that no planter who raises coconuts will ever starve, so long as the world must use soap.

But where do you think this part of the Empire ships most of its copra? Not to England or the civilized world, nor to factories in Trinidad, but to that backward Latin American country of Colombia! They are just building a factory in Trinidad now. The English cannot see why we think this funny.

As long as we have committed ourselves on cocoa, we might as well stick our necks out again, and tell you the rough figures we have estimated for the net profit per acre in coconuts. At the present low price of \$1.60 a hundredweight for copra, the profit is only \$11.00 an acre. But most coconut estates have over a thousand acres. We are not responsible, however, for those who rush to Tobago to verify our figures, out of curiosity or to go into business. The planters have told us everything except their net incomes, which is the only reliable sum, after all; and that, we decided, is none of our business.

We put this theoretical question to another planter: "Suppose that some young man wanted to come down here and buy an estate. What would you advise him planting?"

The answer astounded us. "Cocoa," he said. He went

on to elaborate, "The old idea we've always had—many acres, low yield—is ridiculous. The agronomists over at the College of Tropical Agriculture say that we should get four times our present yield. And today that's about seven fanegas to an acre, if the soil is good and we're lucky. We do it the other way because we're used to the old methods, and because labor is high and we'd rather get a low yield than pay for extensive pruning. I'm too old for those new ideas."

We doubted this last. But what surprised us most was that he had not mentioned all the other products which he had once raised.

"But isn't a one-crop estate always risky?" we asked him. "You've tried limes and grapefruit, for instance—"

"The same thing always happens. Too many people begin raising them, and the price is depressed, just as with cocoa. There are a few acres in tonka beans—and that's the secret. They bring ninety cents a pound because there aren't enough. It's just the old case of supply and demand." He went on to tell us about the lime trees as an example. Some time ago the government had promised to build a factory here to extract lime juice. Planters enthusiastically put in trees. By the end of five or six years, they were bearing. But in the meantime the government had forgotten its promise. In exasperation the estate owners let their tended rows of limes be encroached on by the uncut bush, as are those along our road to Terry Hill. Other planters, up Charlotteville way, in anger cut down their trees. Now there is a lime factory, but it came too late for them.

That is the fate of the tropics—of all farmers, for that matter. Practically all agricultural products, which not one of us could do without, are overproduced. Or rather,

not enough people in this world can afford to pay for the good and necessary things in life; it is absurd to say that the world has "too much" of anything, from potatoes to diamond wrist watches.

Because of its terrain, which is not adaptable to wholesale cultivation of coconuts, Tobago must cling to its cocoa crop. In the editorial quoted above, we gave only part of one sentence: "After the most searching investigation no suitable alternative to cocoa has been found by experts, and though its position as the principal agricultural staple has been irrevocably lost," the sentence begins, and ends with our excerpt, "this crop will have to be continued for lack of something better."

The planters sense their defeat. Yet always they are hoping. "Who knows?" they say. "Besides, it's like cutting your heart out to level a field that's taken seven or eight years to bear well."

They are hoping that witchbroom will consume the whole crop in Trinidad. But they cast out of their minds several things they know quite well. They forget their ill-fated Producers' Co-operative Association, which was at first a laughingstock, then an exasperation, and now within the last few months, has blossomed in the newspapers into a juicy scandal with alleged irregularities in the books and obvious mismanagement by a series of totally incompetent if not dishonest clerks. They forget this whole marketing situation.

They forget, too, that the speculators in London and New York, who never saw a cocoa pod or never tried to make a black work, have forced the prices down. Because it is impossible to store cocoa long in the tropics, and factories for making chocolate must be situated in

a cold climate. They forget, too, what they have said—that the dairy interests nearer England have introduced milk chocolate, so that only a fraction of the pure ingredient need be used nowadays.

There is one other thing, the cause of all their real woe. Privately they may remember Tobago's history, when other countries could produce sugar with cheaper labor, after the emancipation. It is a kind of poetic justice, perhaps, for that former slavery. For the Gold Coast Negroes of Africa, the brothers of these West Indian blacks, have learned to raise cocoa in great quantities, and far cheaper. That is the revenge of a continent. It makes no difference, in these days of brilliant chemists who can infuse anything synthetically, that Trinidad cocoa is and has always been unsurpassed. Quality no longer commands a high enough price.

We pardon them, therefore, when they curse their blacks, and the "high" wages. The planters are only humanly venting their anger. And their fear, too. It must be that, they cannot help but realize. . . .

Not long ago we were talking to one of them who had just been threatened with a lawsuit from a black man. The suit was to force the planter to take up the contract he had made with this Negro. The cocoa trees were bearing now, and by custom as well as contract the white man was practically forced to pay the usual price of a shilling for each bearing tree, which means about seventy-two dollars an acre.

The contract covered perhaps two or three acres at the most. But it was a precedent, that was the fearful part. If one black man had succeeded, all would clamor for cash on the line. The planters were caught in their

own traps, by a system which they had so cleverly laid when times and prices were good.

This is a feudal system, there is no denying—renting out the land and then gathering it back into the great estate. But Tobago is full of peasant proprietors who own their land; we have spoken chiefly of the estates because they alone have always been significant in the history of the island.

But now? Take an actual case of a black man who owns ten acres of land. Last year he shipped three thousand pounds of cocoa, something more than twenty-seven fanegas. He has picked and filled over a hundred baskets and taken them on his donkey down to a licensed dealer in cocoa. If he had cured the beans himself, he would have made a profit, in that extremely good year, of about \$375. This season the same crop would have brought only \$125. A poor return on a year's work, you may say.

Yet his time is his own. He and his family perform the labor. As the blacks go, he is well off. And there the moral lies, too plainly. He, and he alone, can afford to raise cocoa, which is about all Tobago seems fitted for.

Despite the conflicting evidence which we've purposely tried to present just as it came to us—as it would doubtless come to you if you had begun to ask questions here—it seems to be only a matter of time before the estates will once more have to be abandoned. Not, of course, with the dramatic suddenness of a century ago when the hurricane symbolized the end; but with a certain slow and inevitable degeneracy that will leave the blacks of Africa and of this island in possession of the field.

Who, then, can blame the planter when he growls? "The blacks are too lazy," he retaliates. "They don't

want to better themselves. There are few who will bother to raise that much cocoa. No, they'd rather come and work for us, when they feel like it. In plain words, they're an inferior race—you should be able to see that. Not only lazy, but superstitious because they're ignorant. Why, I could tell you some tales . . .”

## *Jumbies and Obeah*

"DE cat, hit has a cold," Martin said to us one morning.

Nutmeg, lying in a patch of sunlight on the gallery, was purring like a young dynamo.

"Nonsense, Martin, she's perfectly well."

"No'm, can't you hear dat noise she make? All cats has colds in der t'roats, dat's why dey sounds."

Our skepticism of Martin's knowledge concerning animal husbandry and natural causations had increased no less than our amused interest in his involved and fanciful explanations.

We were certainly beginning to realize, as suggested to us by several planters, how the atavistic beliefs of these Negroes not only hedged in their own lives, but mightily influenced our existence at Terry Hill.

We had been particularly bothered by the bats flying in and out of the house at night, and their general untidiness of habit made housekeeping rather a chore. At last we decided something would simply have to be done about it. Because each evening they would swoop out at the juncture of the galvanize roof and the drainpipe, we conceived the idea of trapping them there with a large gunny sack. This we proposed to Martin. He and his friend Scipio could easily rig up a burlap bag.

As usual, our black servant had something un construc-

tive to offer. "De bats, dey won' come out into dat sack."

"Of course they will, Martin! They'll have to."

"Well, when you gets dem in dere, what does you do wid 'em?" he asked triumphantly.

"You and Scipio can take them down to the river and drown them."

"I wouldn' care to do dat to no bats. I don' wish to put no bats asleep in de river," he said with finality.

And the bats were never caught.

Only later did we discover the reason for his obstinacy. It was his firm belief that the souls of the bats might return in some strange form to haunt him—as jumbies.

Martin told us many things, little by little. Occasionally he would let out some cherished belief or superstition, and by feigning great and solemn interest, we sometimes persuaded him to grow expansive. A strange night cry outside the house he said was an owl: something very like a cat, he added. Leotha contributed another fantastic statement which is generally believed among the blacks. The bright-green lizard we often see and admire about the garden is actually a dangerous beast, according to her. They call it a "twenty-four-hour" lizard, because it is supposed to clamp itself upon a person's arm with such tenacity that only a hot iron applied to the green back will remove it. The remedy, however, is of no avail; within twenty-four hours the victim will die.

They also subscribe to the world-wide superstition of the ill-luck attendant if any wild bird enters our house. Everything from a pigeon to a wild canary has flown in, and each time Martin has predicted death and disaster for someone in our family. Once we tried to get him to drive out a little bird—but no, indeed. He would have no truck with anything so certainly dangerous. While



we formed a cordon of two and drove it out, Martin watched us with perspiration dripping from his black brow and his eyes rolling in fear, all the time predicting in a sort of Gregorian chant dire happenings that would come to us and ours. Nothing has yet occurred, but his faith remains unshaken.

The credulity of these blacks is endless. One day we came upon Martin brewing a strange, rough-looking leaf in a great pot of water. The potion was good for a cold in the chest, he informed us. Yet when we asked the name of the leaf he had no answer.

"But how do you know it's good for you?" we asked.

"Some people in de village say so when dey pass 'n' see de tree."

However, their belief in native lore is nicely blended with an equally childlike faith in the Bible. Both our blacks are Methodists, and Leotha sometimes lends her clear high soprano to the choir.

One afternoon we had come out on the gallery after a rain had passed to smell the fresh earth and observe how sparkling each green or red thing had become. High over the ridge a great rainbow threw its arc.

Martin, who is always delighted with an audience and knows we are forever seeking information about the island, paused to ask us if we had those pretty things in America.

"Dat's what we calls a rainbow," he volunteered.

We were enchanted. "Is *that* so?" we said admiringly, with the proper note of encouragement.

"I knows dat hit cut de rain," he added. "An' God, He promise no more flood . . ." he trailed off vaguely. "Hit say so in de Bible."

Such occasional references to the more spiritual things

in life gave us the idea that probably our servants would like to prolong their Sunday afternoons off so that they could stay for the church vespers. But not at all. Just as dusk came, we were sure to hear their laughter as they came up the hill. At first we imagined they were only impressing us and that this eagerness would wear off. Yet the weeks passed, and still they returned early. And we didn't flatter ourselves that a few months' residence would develop them into faithful old retainers.

Then as we began to ask about the jumbies, the truth came out. We had been told the blacks would never admit having seen one, for the ghost would only haunt them more persistently if its name were mentioned. To overcome this reluctance we hit upon the idea of describing our own experiences with American jumbies. As a climax Jeff brought out the tale about the *tupapau* of Tahiti: the great black dog that is seen on certain moonlit nights, so large that it can spring over a whole coconut grove. Martin was breathless with excitement, even though Leotha screwed up her face and gave us a large wink.

"I saw a jumbie once," Martin admitted, not to be outdone. "Hit was in de garage, and right away I gets a fever and de boss, he give me aspirin and rum."

"And what did the jumbie look like, Martin?"

We had gone too far. He was suddenly overcome with the enormity of his admission, and his memory became a convenient blank.

"Probably you have very small ones here," we remarked slightly. "Now, ours—"

"Sometimes dey look very strange," he conceded, "wit' long white eyelashes and jes' a head an' no body. Sort of floats."

This, we were sure, was a description of Martin's jumbie.

However, Leotha scoffed. She indignantly denied ever having seen one.

"But Martin has," we argued, "so there must be jumbies."

"Oh, Martin!" she replied severely. "He used to walk de roads alone after dark. Now, we comes home early."

One evening we were returning with friends from the windward part of the island. We had lingered too long over our rum cocktails at an estate house where we had paid a call; the short twilight soon vanished, and darkness caught us before we were halfway home. The windward road turns forbidding as soon as the sun goes down; what was all shining foliage is transmuted to eerie, waving forms, through which the car dashes as if into a long, black tunnel. We wished for a full moon; with that silvery glint upon endless palm leaves and the shifting sea, each bay a bright pool, the scene becomes friendly again. But this night it was black as pitch. We did not meet one solitary soul upon the road, and every little shack was tightly shuttered. We seemed the only visitors to a desert island.

As we came to one particularly dark stretch we realized we had a flat tire. While the men changed it by a feeble torchlight, Jeff and the planter's wife walked a few paces back where a low stone bridge arched over a shallow inlet. Beside the bridge a path seemed to lead off into an even more solid darkness.

Then suddenly they saw it. Standing out with frightening clarity on that path was a weird cross. It had been

clumsily drawn with powdered chalk or lime, but it seemed to glow like phosphorescence. Jeff leaned over to examine the mark.

Her friend stayed her, at the same time giving a funny little laugh, as if she were apologizing. "Probably it's only the work of children," she said lightly. "But then again, it may be some sort of obeah mark. It just doesn't pay to be too inquiring."

Obeah is the island name for witchcraft or voodooism. Naturally, this term is African in origin, brought by the slaves as an integral and important part of their religion. But surely here, in this day and age—! And we could hardly believe that this Englishwoman was actually—well, not frightened, but distrustful. When we were all together again, secure in the speeding car, they told us that every village has an obeah man, a sort of witch doctor, who can work charms and evil on people. That recalled to us a recent item in the Trinidad paper of a man who was given six months' imprisonment for "obtaining the sum of one dollar on the assumption of supernatural power."

"Such practices are of course forbidden by the government," our friends told us, "but it is hopeless to prevent all of them. The last one who practiced more or less openly in Mount St. George—no doubt there is another now—was not only the constable but even a deacon in the Methodist church." And they admitted that their family had often been the target for obeah, evil directed at them by some grudge-bearing black.

Once they had come upon a piece of paper planted beneath the estate house, with all their names written on it; on top was a burning candle. This kind of obeah is called "putting the light on you," and, say the blacks,

is certain death for all mentioned if the candle is not extinguished before the flame touches the paper. Another time their overseer found an old bottle in the driveway to the house, full of crows' feathers and black pins. With great courage, he removed this deadly charm to the sea.

When we later read Bryan Edwards, we were not surprised to find a long discourse on the practice of obeah, for then the slaves were newly imported to the West Indies. What was more striking and even sinister was the identity of his descriptions with the tales which our friends had been telling us, over a century later. He enumerated the more harmless instances of "setting obeah" on a thief, and the common practices of hanging a bottle of eggshells over the door to deter marauders, and the general dependence upon and fear of the obeah doctor by all the black men. One of these witches was found to be the instigator of a riot of *Koromantyn* Negroes back in 1760, and shortly after, a plantation owner came back to his estate to find many of his *Papaw* blacks suffering from a mysterious ailment which could be attributed only to the more harmful forms of obeah. Finally a dying Negress confessed that her stepmother, a hale crone of eighty, was the cause of this sickness and of nearly a hundred deaths among her people during the last fifteen years. The owner broke into her cabin, and found the inside of the thatched roof completely covered with relics of her trade, "consisting of rags, feathers, bones of cats," and those other implements which had been enumerated in a new law: "blood, parrots' beaks, dogs' and alligators' teeth, grave-dirt, rum and egg-shells." In an earthenware pot under her bed was discovered a "prodigious quantity" of small, round clay balls, whitened on the outside and filled with hair and

rags and all the other paraphernalia. Upon this occasion the shack was burned down and the crone sent off with some Spaniards; but as a rule, Edwards notes, the blacks were loath to give any advice or assistance, and usually denied the very word obeah.

Jumbies, however, are merely the ghosts of the many souls who died and were buried on the estates, and they particularly like to roam about empty or closed houses. On more than one occasion—one incident happened to our friend's father—men have come upon old graves. This particular time, the planter was talking to a friend, saying that he was going to dig the foundation for his house where these old graves had been uncovered. At that moment they heard a hollow sound issue very clearly from underneath this rude tomb. Just to be on the safe side, the house was placed on a more congenial spot. Besides, no black man would ever have touched those antique stones.

But there is another kind of ghost that is a living being by day. This worst of all jumbies is called a soucoyant. No one seems to know the derivation of the word; our guess is that it might possibly be a corruption of the French: literally, under the setting sun, or perhaps, after dark. This special evil one is a hag who has the power of shedding her skin at midnight and turning into a ball of fire. She may also shrink herself into the most minute form and enter tightly closed houses through a crack in the boards, or a keyhole. Once inside, this wicked one will pounce upon the sleeping occupant and suck the blood from his veins. In the morning the victim will feel very weak, but remember nothing of the occurrence. And instead of regaining strength, the unfortunate will gradually pine away, and die.

Such a visitation, however, can be detected, for there will be drops of blood upon the bedding. Of course, it would never be considered that the cause was nothing more supernatural than a bedbug.

Yet there is one antidote to such horrors. If a pile of rice or sand is left upon the doorstep, the soucoyant is obliged to stop first and count each grain. Unless this pile is very small, dawn will come before the counting is finished, and a disappointed old woman will go hobbling away at day cleaning.

Like all folklore, these odds and ends of information are merely tantalizing; origins and meanings are lost, probably even to those who practice obeah today. Some of the tales are the common stock of all primitive peoples, and there is an endless list of don'ts: Don't call a name loudly in a lonely spot, as there might be a jumbie about who would hear and start calling that person's name until death comes; don't stand in a doorway after dark, unless you leave room for any stray jumbie to pass through without touching you, as contact with it will make you sick at your stomach, and swell your head to five times its size; don't pick up any food you have dropped upon the floor, for it is evident a jumbie wants to eat, and it will only make you sick; don't drain a cup to the last drop, but sprinkle a little upon the ground for the jumbie. . . .

After hearing these tales that night as we were driven up into the darkness of our hill, we almost hated to have our friends leave us before our black and empty house. It was all nonsense, but . . .

An invisible source of fear is always the most alarming. And we have reflected, not too calmly ourselves, that this was one more instance of that British mixture of con-

temptuous disregard and vague fear of what the blacks might do to them. What Edwards wrote is as true today:

“The skill of some Negroes, in the art of poisoning, has been noticed ever since the colonists became much acquainted with them. . . . The secret and insidious manner in which this crime is generally perpetrated, makes the legal proof of it extremely difficult. Suspicions therefore have been frequent, but detections are rare: these murderers have *sometimes* been brought to justice, but it is reasonable to believe that a far greater number have escaped with impunity.”

Would we ourselves ever understand our black servants? Their savage, eerie beliefs stood like a wall between us.

As we lighted a match and it sputtered into a feeble flame, off in the bush somewhere issued the cry of a night-hawk, lonely and melancholy beyond expression.

Poor-me-one, it lamented in mournful down-scale.



## *Carnival*

ONE morning late in February we were having breakfast at the ordinary time—altogether, it would have seemed to us merely one of the parade of days. It was Saturday, but as usual we were not planning to go anywhere that night. As we lingered over our second cups of coffee, we merely noted, as we seldom failed to do, what a fine scene stretched before us. The brilliant morning sunlight had already searched out the green barricade, and shone over a violently blue sea: a peaceful day on our hilltop. Although we did not remark that obvious fact, right then.

Suddenly, as we looked out to sea again, just beyond Smith's Island appeared a menacing gray destroyer, a part of the Royal Navy, the first real suggestion of the Empire, at our doorstep!

The ship inched along toward Granby Point; it seemed to be drifting down the coast, for no smoke issued from the funnels. The sight of this vessel was no less of a shock because we had been, in a casual manner, forewarned, and had heard rumors. The actual presence of this powerful implement of war changed the whole aspect of our peaceful tropic island. A kind of foreboding oppressed us. It was all the more strange because the arrival anticipated by two days a happy event to which every black looks forward the whole year.

On the following Monday was to be their greatest festival and holiday, reputedly full of merrymaking and general lightheartedness: Lent was nearly upon us, and for two days preceding Ash Wednesday the island would be given over to Carnival, which we had heard so much about.

This ship, steaming down from St. Vincent, was coming to Scarborough to stand like a restraining and kill-joy parent, to see that no "trouble" occurred. So Carnival began for us.

Nothing had been reported in the newspapers, but we had heard rumors that several destroyers would suddenly appear in Trinidad. No one had known that Tobago, too, would be so honored. Yet we had not been on this island half a day before we had heard the basic reasons why this precaution was considered necessary. "The recent unrest, you know," our informers said, recalling the bloody riots of last June.

We called Martin in, because as a rule only the coastal steamer or the tiny fishing boats break our ocean—or once in a blue moon, far off on the horizon, a steamer headed in from Cape Town.

"What's that?" we asked innocently.

"Oh, dat?" He rolled his eyes with the unusual effort of considering an unforeseen or novel event. "Dat's de—I believe hit's de *HMS Queen Mary*," he said doubtfully, not wanting to be at a complete loss: the papers are of course full of the pride of the British, and it was the only ship's name he could remember.

We let it go at that. But Martin probably knew, all right. The destroyer was not coasting down the length of the island merely to save fuel: it was on review, to show every single inhabitant that the might of the Empire

had arrived. Old residents say the blacks have a vivid memory of the time when the bluejackets once came ashore, bayonets fixed and gleaming, and ran them back into the hills.

Early the next Monday morning, when the day had hardly started to "clean," we were awakened by a chant from our garden:

"Good mornin' mistress, good mornin', sir,  
And how are you?  
I come from Scarborough  
To say, How do. . . ."

It is impossible with mere words to give you the especial character of that chant, which went on breathlessly and with many stanzas, punctuated time and again by this greeting. Even if we wrote the musical notes, showing how their singsong starts high, descends on the next syllable, goes up again and repeats this seesaw, it would give none of the rich overtones of the Negro voice, nor the gradual perception to us as we sleepily aroused ourselves and put on bathrobes to go see our minstrel.

Carnival had come to Terry Hill. This first masker was arrayed in a gorgeous devil-suit of pink and green satin. His cap possessed the expected horns, on which jingled little bells. In his hands he carried a rake, ornamented with flowing serpentine, which he thrust forward as he shuffled and gyrated, all the time chanting endlessly. Martin and Leotha were bent over double, partly because they caught more of the words of this extemporaneous song than we did, and partly because any queer sight will send them off into uncontrollable mirth. We watched

the performance, the song becoming so fixed in our minds we have never forgotten its simple, persuasive melody. Yet we were a little uncertain when to make a donation; obviously until we did, the fellow would dance and sing himself to exhaustion, and we felt rather responsible for prolonging the agony too long. But it appeared our entertainer had not finished with his ritual. Presently, retreating, he gave his rake to one of the fascinated little boys who had followed him up from the village, and unwinding a very long rope from around his waist, our devil proceeded to crack it mightily. To make such a loud and expert report, which sent a little shiver through all of us, is no mean accomplishment, and again Martin and Leotha were in stitches. We never did learn the exact reason for this whip: it seemed to be a kind of climax, and perhaps is some sort of compensation for the memory of the days when their masters laid on the lash—which is still a form of legal punishment, for that matter.

At that point we beckoned him forward, donated generously for his seven-mile walk, and watched him retreat down the road, never once coming out of character, nor stopping his eternal song and dance.

As the morning wore on other maskers came—because a stranger always contributes more than the estate people—but we gave progressively less. Our next visitor was not so elegantly attired: he had merely put flour and red paint on his face, made a dunce's cap, and sewn a few ribbons to his clothes, but he played a banjo as he sang and danced. On the top of his cap was a miniature airplane propeller which he delightedly sent twirling. He was so insane and so much of a clown that we had to be reassured by Leotha, who of course recognized him, that this was not his usual manner.

But our votes were cast for Leotha's two little brothers, Milton and Colin. Colin is the cripple, with one very short leg that makes him walk like a sidehill wampus, and sends our blacks into laughter whenever he runs wobbling away, his heart obviously crying with shame and distress. His older brother, Milton, wore a mask and devil's cap, and carried the proper paraphernalia of rake and whip. With the expertness of a real trouser, he went through the traditional motions, all the while singing in a deep voice, which hardly went with his slight figure, words he had made up all by himself. Little Colin stood by admiringly, tapping his foot, and acting the Greek chorus, chanting *jab, jab* as Milton thrust his rake at him:

"I eat no ginger, I 'fraid no danger,  
O—jab, jab, O, ha, ha—O, ho, *ho!*  
When come into season, the Carnival season,  
I got no reason.  
O—jab, jab, O, ha, ha—O, ho, *ho!*  
I just arrive  
From de home of hell—  
O—jab, jab, O, ha, ha—O, ho, *ho!*  
Give me that rope [to Chorus]  
And I'll give you a whip [smacks him]  
O—jab, jab, O, ha, ha—O, ho, *ho!*  
There's a trouble tree at Mount St. George  
And every man have to pay for it!  
O—jab, jab, O, ha, ha—O, ho, *ho!"*

We liked the trouble tree especially. But Leotha says Milton just made that up. At any rate, this young poet was well rewarded for his services, and Jeff contrived a mask for Colin out of red and green Christmas wrappings, with silver stars. The next day we saw them, and

they waved merrily. But George, another of the Cater-son tribe, had appropriated the mask.

Later that afternoon we were talking with one of the estate owners and his family. "Oh, this Carnival!" they sighed. Maskers had been coming into their place all day long, and the younger children were thoroughly frightened by the spectacle of devils. They considered our donations rather silly. "It's bad enough when the men come around in costumes, but now all the black children have taken to it, and why should they expect pennies? There was a couple who came in here—one of them wearing a mask made out of Christmas paper."

We said nothing. We wanted to know whether it was worth going into Scarborough the next day for the culmination of the celebration. They shrugged; they were indifferent, and put out by this holiday interruption. The estate owner complained that these people were refusing to work for *two whole days*, and probably, he added with cynicism born as much of impatience as experience, they wouldn't want to work for the rest of the week.

A very good thing for the planter's peace of mind that he didn't live in some Latin country!

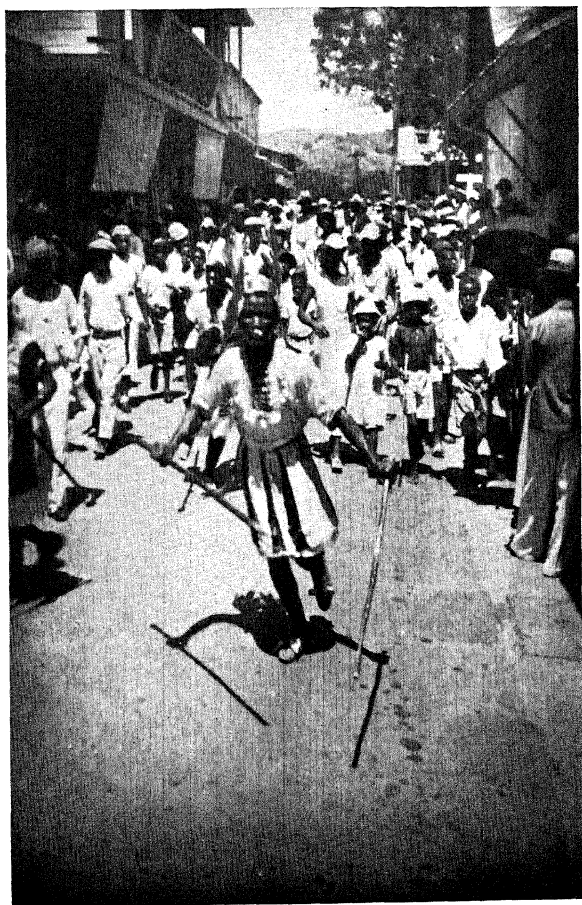
"But perhaps you'd like it," they said. "Of course, it's nothing like Trinidad. When we took the children in to Scarborough last year, the blacks crowded around our car and we could hardly get away. Always begging for money. . . ."

We had considered going over to Port-of-Spain for the festivities, but other people had rather discouraged us; besides, we thought it was more to the point to see what happened on our own island. Every glowing tale

about what Carnival was in Trinidad in the old days always ended with a depreciation of the present, emasculated celebrations. And when we saw the photographs in the *Trinidad Guardian* a few days later, we quite agreed: it is now a purely commercial fête and has degenerated as has our own New Orleans Mardi Gras, with too elaborate costumes on a few, and too many business houses advertising their wares by means of floats.

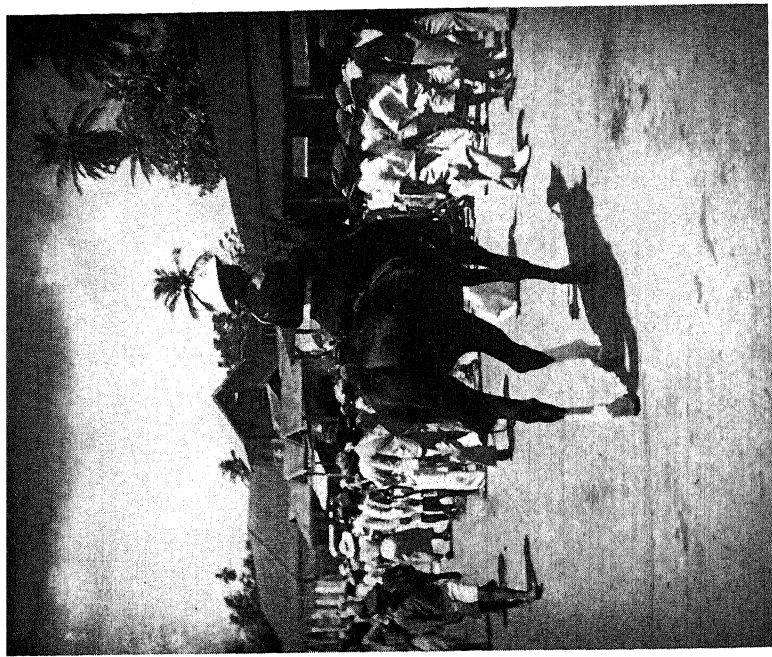
We had read that Trinidad must have a "cleaner" Carnival this year, and a committee had been appointed by the mayor to see that this hint was carried out. The "recent unrest" was of course the motive for this, as Carnival time in the past had more than once served as an opportunity for battles; for this short period the blacks were protected behind their masks against authority. Sending for destroyers, the stringent rulings and the general distaste among many people had a firm basis of reason, certainly. And an Englishman is taught reason along with the Bill of Rights. Pageantry is "nonsense"—except at the Coronation, the changing of the guards at Buckingham Palace and other military parades, and in such movies as *Cavalcade* and the dramatization of that epitome of pomp and circumstance and power, the reign of Victoria—now, the Great.

The origins of Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago are obscure, but the old observances are worth noting. It was obviously started by one of the Catholic countries that first possessed the islands; the English papers like to stress its birth in pagan Rome as the Saturnalia, which is historically correct, as far as it goes. One person told us that Carnival here originated at the time of the French possession, and that one of the stipulations in the treaty of 1814, which ceded these colonies for the final time to



Carnival is their only day.





He nearly caused trouble.



Carnival lizard.

Britain, was that the blacks should be allowed always to observe this holiday. Probably this is not historically correct—we have not been able to verify the statement—but it is symbolically in keeping with the British attitude. Even those who encourage it (privately, they say it is a good vent for the black population's feelings) adopt either a condescending or a prissy, old-maidish attitude that is behind such a lead in the newspapers: "Tossing care and social convention to the winds, Trinidad plunges wholeheartedly tomorrow into the celebrations . . ."

Neither care nor conventions are tossed anywhere at all, and everybody knows that. But in the old days, a good many other things were tossed.

The Spaniards, it is claimed, were responsible for handing down the dangerous pastimes of flour and missile throwing during this prelude to Lent. As far back as 1585, the accounts say reprovingly, the Pope banished such practices even from Rome. In 1850, only a short while after the emancipation, a stop was put to week-long celebrations; anyone seen with a mask before the Monday preceding Ash Wednesday would be "immediately arrested and dealt with according to law"—i. e., probably have the lash put on him. That was all right, and thirty years passed before another dangerous custom was abolished—the *cannes brûlées*, words that betray its French origin.

Literally, this term means "burnt canes," of course, and is variously supposed to be a hang-over from slavery days when everyone was called out to fight fire spreading in the sugar-cane fields, or, others maintain, to burn the rats which infested the estate acreage. In any case, it came to mean a sort of torchlight procession; a stop was put to it in 1881. A much more savage practice called

*bois*, or stick-fighting, was also discouraged—a kind of dueling which resulted in plenty of broken heads and cuts, and general bad feeling, all to the accompaniment of “bottle and spoon” and bamboo bands.

Today groups of maskers may carry sticks only if there are more than six of them, the idea presumably being that such a large group would not be duelers. The big African voodoo drums are in some places prohibited entirely, as in Barbados, and cannot be played in the town of Scarborough, because they rouse the people to their former savagery. One night just before Carnival we were coming back from Speyside and heard more than one band along the road, thumping bamboo sticks.

But the most noted feature of the Trinidad Carnival is the calypso singing. The island is proud of these extemporaneous ballads, and rightly, although their creation here is not unique: they are African in origin, but all races have had them, from the minstrels who sang of Charlemagne and Beowulf and the Cid, to the modern *corrida* singers of Spanish America.

Many a tourist hears the great practitioners of this art when the cruise ships anchor inside the Bocas, and such famous singers as Radio, Lord Executor, Growler or Atilla the Hun come aboard to invent lines about the more noted of the passengers. Struthers Burt and many another writer have extolled them. The most popular one today is still the calypso about Edward VIII; you should hear them sing this feelingly in their husky voices to appreciate it. The verses go on interminably, but these are the most amusing:

“It’s love it’s love alone  
That caused King Edward to leave the throne,

We know Edward is noble and great  
But love caused him to abdicate.

It's love it's love alone  
That caused King Edward to leave the throne,

On the 10th of December we heard the talk  
That he gave the throne to the Duke of York.

It's love it's love alone  
That caused King Edward to leave the throne,

He said my robes and crown is upon my mind,  
But I cannot leave Miss Simpson behind.

It's love it's love alone,  
That caused King Edward to leave the throne,

If you see Miss Simpson walk in the street  
She could fall an Angel with the body beat,

It's love it's love alone,  
That caused King Edward to leave the throne. . . ."

Yet as the songs are more properly of Trinidad than this island ward, we heard more of the old ones, the sort Leatha occasionally has sung to us. But her brother Milton was emulating the masters in his own improvised song about the trouble tree. The tune is generally in a minor key, and is a kind of commentary on news of the day, or some local personality. A few years ago, they tell us, the white people became interested in this Carnival singing and started going to the tents, which had been exclusively for the blacks, where these new tunes were sung. Probably some visiting writer or musician first praised them, as is generally the case with local, home-spun arts in every country on the globe.

Any Negro will act if he has an audience, and the approval and even praise of the whites enchanted the singers. They noticed there was the most laughter when the words were slightly off-color; and soon every song was ribald or just plain filthy. Moreover, they began making up satiric or libelous verses about the white people in the audience. This undoubtedly started when some man, to play a joke on a friend, arranged in advance to have such verses composed. Under cover of the Carnival spirit, the blacks began hitting back at the foibles of their masters until things got out of hand. The Carnival Improvement Committee this year was especially tempering that inclination.

The calypso Leotha sang to us one night soon after we came here quite mystified us at first:

“Inspector Power gave the command  
I mean, when I heard the sireen alarrum  
Inspector Power gave the command  
I mean, when I heard the sireen alarrum—

Chorus: Out the fire, out the fire!

I drank my rum at the railway bar  
I mean, when I heard the sireen afar  
I took my rum jes' to admire  
But what I heard was—

Chorus: Out the fire, out the fire!

A piece of fire through storm and rain  
When down the wharf and when down the crane—  
Ol' Mis' Mary I was made to understan'  
She run down the road with poor charm in han'—

Chorus: Out the fire, out the fire!

Going to the country was my desire  
 I mean, to save myself from such a fire.  
 Arima Bus service first, if you please—  
 So I run down the road for my comfort and ease.

Chorus: Out the fire, out the fire!"

No, it has nothing to do with the lads of the bucket brigade; it is not the firemen's chant. Inspector Power ordered his constable to open fire ("out the fire") upon the rioting blacks last June. The words are no less obscure than usual, nor the syntax. Another about the same trouble is *Charlie King*, (spelling and punctuation, as above, by Leotha):

"Charlie King, Charlie King,  
 Everybody says he dost something.  
 Charlie King, Charlie King,  
 Everybody says fire in his skin  
 Listen I am telling everybody  
 Have you ever heard of the calamity  
 How Charlie King detective of Trinidad  
 Was bearnt to ashes down Fyzabad [name of town].

"Charlie was a member of the poleece force  
 He know that the government feel the lost  
 Tell my dear friends I will like to know  
 If he has gone to heaven or down below  
 Charlie King, Charlie King,  
 Everybody says he dost something."

On Carnival Tuesday, Mardi Gras, we sent for Henry and went down to Scarborough to see the fun. It was practically the only occasion when we noticed that some of the Negroes—in contrast to the whites—were slightly drunk. Rum is about three shillings a bottle, seventy-

two cents, and most blacks can't afford the habit of drinking. This blessing their English masters are likely not to appreciate.

A few bands met us at the outskirts of Scarborough: a band, by the way, carries no musical instruments. There were musicians, however, serenading every one of the stores, for this was no legal holiday. But not until we drove down past the dock did the crowd grow thick. Groups of six to ten blacks—without exception, men; the women merely tagged along or watched from the sidelines—were cavorting around in an aimless but vociferously happy fashion. There were some costumed, oddly enough, as Carib Indians, whose warpaint and long black wigs might have taken a prize at any masquerade. Four other men were simulating the gray destroyer to their childlike satisfaction. About their middles hung this homemade papier-mâché replica and we could see them hilariously propelling it by their eight brown legs into the screaming crowd ahead. The whole meaning of the real destroyer's appearance was lost on them. The ship itself, as if taking offense at this black obduracy, had sailed away the day before.

Henry, his face solemn as ever, drove through the mob, sharply telling them not to lay hands on his polished car: a chauffeur here belongs to a race apart, quite above his brethren in social status. He took us on out, past more maskers who lay exhausted beneath the palms, to the Crusoe. The hotel was full of tourists and Trinidadians, and we were sure most of the bands would be attracted to this lucrative spot. So we joined the array of guests and the battery of photographers, armed with expensive cameras and color film.

We did not have long to wait. Men with queer cocked hats appeared and made up chanting speeches about whomever they recognized. There were two men representing a donkey: an old trick, but we found out later our servants, who had gone in to see the fun, liked this animal best of all.

The Hamiltons were growing a little bored with the continuous round, for the hotel was in a constant uproar, but they admitted it was the best Carnival that Scarborough had ever had. They reflected a different sentiment from some of the planters. "After all, it's their only time for real fun during the year," they said. "And of course our guests like to see the costumes. The only trouble is that we don't give prizes as they do over in Trinidad, and the result is, they're learning to beg." Although prizes would increase the Negroes' self-respect, to our minds it is a question of whether such a plan would not destroy the spontaneity and make it a sterile and commercial show like the calypso-singing for the whites.

Not many of the costumes, however, could rival the outfits of Trinidad, except one man and his company. This sea-green lizard, complete with head and working jaws and overlapping scales, was led on a chain—most of the time he crawled on hands and knees—by a courtier whose dress vaguely resembled an Elizabethan's. He was accompanied by a number of green-clothed nymphs or dryads with gossamer wings—possibly out of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; or possibly they resembled the lizard's diet of flies and insects. This enterprising leader undoubtedly had long been saving his money, and perhaps bought the outfit at a costumer's in Port-of-Spain; but he certainly profited on his investment, for we saw



half-crowns and shillings flow from the tourists' hands.

The inspector of public works took us and two others in town again for a last view of the Indians and boats and donkeys and nondescripts. True enough, the Carnival wasn't a great deal, but the people enjoyed it and it was for them. The significance lay in the British attitude.

Officialdom, the symbol of the Empire or at least the local government, was represented by a great black bobby on his handsome bay charger. Sweating under his heavy blue serge uniform, with the only concession to the tropics in his tall white helmet, he was officiously keeping the crowd back so that automobiles could pass. He had been brought over from Trinidad and, like all such people, like Henry in his simpler way, he felt his authority and enjoyed demonstrating it.

"I don't like his manner," the inspector said curtly. "These people aren't doing anything, and he's merely making them resentful."

When we got home that night, Leotha voiced the blacks' opinion of that policeman.

"If his horse had trod on a child, madam, de people might have aimed a lash at him"—in other words, hit back, and there would have been hell to pay. And Leotha isn't one with a short temper. Her favorite motto is that she "jes' takes hit cool."

The British, no doubt of it, would like to suppress Carnival altogether. Fifty years ago they halfway considered that move, while some argued Carnival would die out of itself. It in fact has already become less spontaneous in form, but as an investigating committee said then, it will never disappear of its own accord.

These are the only two days when all the blacks are out in full force. Then, particularly in Tobago, the whites

realize how powerless and outnumbered they would be in case of a riot—of a repetition of that “recent unrest.” And an unvoiced fear creeps into their dealings with this race which their forefathers brought to the islands. It is a fear which is greatly relieved by the presence of one of His Majesty’s destroyers.

## *Reading the Riot Act*

It was mostly reverberations from the Trinidad riots, wild and terrifying rumors, that they received here in Tobago last June. All the details are not important to an understanding, but it started with a proposed strike among the oil workers in southern Trinidad. Oil is naturally most important to the British Empire. A black man by the name of Uriah Butler knew that. He was the ring-leader and began making seditious speeches.

Or rather, so they claimed when he came up for trial a few months ago. As usual, after the event, there was a lot of talk about outside agitators, radicals, paid agents of Moscow and the usual tommyrot. Yet Butler, a Trinidadian, certainly was enough of a torch to inflame the ignorant minds of the workers, and incite them to riot. Most people admit that the oil companies could have paid better wages: the dividends more than insured a good return on the stockholders' investment. And you must bear in mind that there were no trade unions here, no appointed spokesmen, no machinery whatsoever for settling grievances.

A strike did occur. Then Inspector Power went to serve a warrant of arrest on Butler, who was addressing the workers at Fyzabad: if you recall the calypsoes Leotha sang us, you will recognize these names. In attempting

to read the warrant, plainclothesman Corporal Charlie King (also of calypso fame) was mobbed, thrown from a balcony, his leg broken, beaten, oil poured over him and his body ignited. He burned to death. And he was a black.

But the strike became a race riot.

Butler had been spotted before; everyone, especially the government, knew that trouble was brewing, and nothing was done. The governor of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Murchison Fletcher, received a particularly impudent and threatening note, and had first asked Butler to come and talk matters over with him.

There lies the beginning of a significant point, which everyone was still discussing when we arrived. To our minds, it is the paradox of the present-day form of democracy, perhaps not confined to the British Empire. But here was a governor trained in colonial service, who had seen riots in two other posts. Some instinctive feeling of liberalism, which should certainly be as deeply ingrained in the English character as its Empire building and maintaining, had counteracted the tradition of severe paternalism which is generally called the white man's burden. The Governor wanted to talk and reason with Butler, because he firmly believed there was something to be said on the side of the workers. He even made a speech to this effect before the legislative council.

Nonetheless, Butler's arrest was finally decided upon. On that fatal day when the warrant was to be served, it was discovered the papers were not in order; there was delay and indecision in carrying out the plan. A righteous sense of justice balked at highhanded procedure; the very uncertainty of the attempted arrest plainly showed that. Although we greatly admire this uncommon sort of civil

servant, the Governor was, after all, merely a liberal—which is not enough these days if you are going to be on the other side. He was left in an equivocal position, sitting on the fence.

Later on this same day when the mob attacked a detachment of police, Inspector Power withheld fire. Subsequently, the Governor was present when a speech to the blacks by a council member inflamed them more. The police fired to prevent seizure of the refinery. And a message was sent posthaste to Bermuda, where His Majesty's Atlantic fleet is stationed, to dispatch a cruiser. It was there in record time, every steel plate quivering under the forced speed.

But previous to this arrival the mob was not dealt with firmly. Rioting spread. Port-of-Spain was overrun with an insane crowd. The blacks chalked up insults directed at the white women; everyone kept indoors; the stores were barred; the city breathlessly awaited the cruisers—another had been sent for in the interim—and rumors began to fly to Tobago. It was no joking matter by that time.

"Why couldn't the blacks have placed their grievances on the table in an orderly manner?" the English complained afterward. But no one had listened before; there was no mechanism for that.

"On the other hand," some few countered, "why this outrageous display of force by the Empire? Is that any way to answer?" But there was no alternative.

Guy Currier told us about the arrival of the cruisers. He and Deb had had to go to the dentist's in Port-of-Spain, and from the office window they witnessed the approach of the might of an empire.

"I'll never forget," he told us, "the sight of those red-

faced, beef-eating, sweating bluejackets and marines clanking up the street. They had hobnails on their shoes, evidently, and their bayonets were fixed, gleaming in that hot tropical sun, which flashed from their tin hats, too. Believe me, we were never so glad to see anybody in our lives as those big huskies. And you should have seen the blacks. All sudden grins, you know the way they get, and sidling off into side streets. They knew the British meant business, all right."

He told us, too, of the ship that came into the oil fields, full steam ahead. Just as it looked to the horrified blacks as if they were going to be mowed down by a warship that would plow right into the pier, the commander ordered the engines into reverse, and a small tidal wave engulfed the docks. Then the airplanes began zooming off those gray steel decks, swooping down over the town and generally putting the fear of God into those black hearts.

After that, it was all over. A detachment of Sherwood Foresters remained behind. In England, Colonial Secretary Ormsby-Gore appointed a commission of investigation, which he had to duplicate shortly afterward for Barbados. Sir Murchison Fletcher went home and, after we arrived, while the newspapers were still full of verbatim reports on the sedition trials, it was announced that he had "resigned." Sir Mark Young, governor of Barbados, became acting head of the government in Trinidad. He had put down riots on the other island in short order. But it was generally hushed up that one hundred and fifty Negroes had been killed in so doing. Hardly had they finished reading the Riot Act, which must literally be done according to English law, than the police opened fire.

The Inquiry Commission had just left Trinidad before we came. One day early in February we opened our *Trinidad Guardian* to find their complete report.

There were several matters, it appeared to these impartial gentlemen from London, which needed remedying in this island paradise of ours, as well as Trinidad. As the *West India Committee Circular* editorialized, it was indeed a grave indictment of the local government. A great many things and people were roundly censured. The Empire had found one more place where they would have to revise their policy of muddling through.

Recommendations were made—things which even a casual observer, if he didn't suffer from astigmatism, could have seen all along. But also, Sir Murchison Fletcher and other officials were criticized for not dealing more peremptorily with the situation, which had obviously got out of hand. Once more, the paradox. This man, everyone admits, was one of the finest governors the islands have ever had, and he had already initiated enterprises which might have alleviated conditions.

It also happened that Sir Murchison was the first governor to take an active interest in the neglected island ward of Tobago. He saw the need of better roads, better transportation via coastal steamers, and a good deal more. And only last October another man who deeply loved and appreciated Tobago, Colonel Hannington, managing editor of the *Guardian*, had died. These two losses, although purely coincidental, have pushed the little ward into deeper insignificance. Trinidad, late in coming to its prime, is once more the base for another search after El Dorado, but this time it is El Aceite, the black gold of petroleum.

The actual report of the Commission is long and detailed, but as we read over the headings that day, we saw more than one division that could fittingly be applied to Tobago. Mineral resources—that is, oil, and the great pitch lake—are most important to the Empire, but, actually, a small percentage of the people here are engaged in or derive direct benefits from the oil industry. Half the population—all of Tobago—is dependent upon agriculture: cocoa, copra and sugar. And the greatest source of income for the government actually comes not from oil but from customs revenues. This is the reason it is not cheap to buy tinned goods, and why we were so disappointed to find famous British products, from marmalade to pipe tobacco and fine silks and Scotch whisky, very little less than in the States. It is also the reason why Canadian goods, which enjoy a reciprocity treaty between the dominion and the colony, are more favored.

There were other headings about social services and land settlement; but Tobago, as we have already seen, has hundreds of peasant proprietors, and any man may easily procure a bit of land. Housing was not so important as in Trinidad, where there are slums; and, as we have mentioned above, until the Commission's report there was no such person as an industrial adviser and mediator.

All of those items may sound elementary, but reflect that large sections of Trinidad and Tobago have been sleeping back in the eighteenth century.

You call that a trifle exaggerated? The Inquiry Commission obviously did not think so, and named every preventative imaginable against this possible disaffection. Gunboats rushing to the scene will not permanently mend matters. But just now the British are beginning to see



their responsibilities before them, to understand what democracy may really have to mean. These black people were brought out as slaves. No use calling the descendants of those wards ingrates, if they rise up and ask for more, and more.

And in return comes the cry from the planters, "*We cannot pay them more!*"

Yet, the planters have studiously overlooked another facet which came to our attention. From time to time in the papers, an editorial will reveal how great a percentage of the black population suffers from hookworm. The Rockefeller Foundation, which has started to eradicate the disease in our own deep South and has aided many a foreign country, was repulsed here. The government excused its inaction because of lack of funds; meaning, they did not want to appropriate the money from the surplus. But British officials hate interference, and have not realized, until their own Inquiry report stressed the matter, that money for prevention and cure—as Dr. Victor Heiser ably has pointed out—would be money invested. Without hookworm there would be less sickness and more alive, efficient workers. When the blacks we deal with here at Terry Hill are so exasperatingly slow, we have a very good idea what is probably wrong with them.

Another cause is malaria. There is a great conspiracy of silence concerning the "fever" here, because it might possibly hurt the tourist business. This is ridiculous, really, for any traveler with a good imagination and a background of tropical tales should know that malaria is likely to be present. But it is better to come warned than to be surprised. And there are several fairly sure preventatives that can be taken during a short stay. There

is, of course, no absolute guarantee that you will not contract malaria here, although the worst time of year is during the wet summer months. If you are a believer in the tropics, this will not deter you from coming to Tobago, and you can console yourself with the thought that if you had stayed up North, you might well have caught that other reputedly tropical disease, dysentery. We have so far escaped malaria ourselves, because Terry Hill is high, breezy and away from the swamps which breed the *anopheles* mosquito, the only one to transmit the virus here. Also, we are not to windward of a village, for in that position it would be just a little too easy for the mosquito to carry the infected blood of some previous victim to us. And furthermore, we are seldom in an unhealthy spot after nightfall; if we contract it later, we shall append the fact to the end of this chapter.

But it is not the white person, who after all can afford to buy quinine or the other new treatments, that suffers so much as the blacks.

Two doctors are stationed here in Tobago and paid by the government: one man for the northern half, the other for the southern part, which includes a very delightful-looking hospital on the great hill above Scarborough, where the old fort is. If we should have to be sick, we can think of no more charming place to spend a convalescence.

There is no question whatsoever that these doctors are handicapped, and that the appropriations for medical service have been too small, as the Inquiry report infers. For example, to the utter dismay of a visiting physician from New York, there is no X-ray machine on the island. The doctor here modestly reminded this colleague that such a situation exists in many, many places in the world.

There is also no question that the doctors have their hands full, and every Saturday is clinic day. There is, however, a decided question and difference of opinion among the residents whether the doctors are paid too little. The bill for a special visit to Terry Hill, they say, would be eight dollars. As the doctor is paid a regular salary in the first place, and as the distance is not so very great—about fifteen miles each way—this seems to us and every planter to whom we have talked, an outrageous sum. Actually, one would not be compelled to pay the extra fee; but the next time the doctor might not call on you so promptly.

What about the blacks, most of whom never see eight dollars from one month to the next? They can go to the clinic, the health office, where they are charged a dollar or two. This is steep enough, and is an answer to the doctors' complaint that the people will not come until they are nearly dead or far gone with a sickness. Whereupon, because they cannot be immediately cured, they lose all faith in modern medicine. We learned another reason for their distrust, too. . . . But suppose some black is desperately sick; he lives in Mount St. George, and cannot journey to where the doctor has his office. Unless it is one particular day in the month, he must exist without medical assistance—or die.

That fault does not lie with the doctors. But through our Martin, we gained a further and none-too-flattering insight.

One morning we came to breakfast and were served by Leotha. Martin was in bed with a "fever." Fortunately this was the very day for the doctor to be below in the village. As we were going away on a picnic, we dropped by and left him a note asking him to come up, and to leave word what ailed our boy. Because Martin

had complained of an ache in his side, we were afraid it might possibly be appendicitis.

That evening we arrived home to find a bland reply: Martin had malaria, and a little "right-side achitis." For two weeks Martin stayed in bed. He may have had a slight attack of fever, a recurrence because he was weak, but we soon discovered through our own diagnosis the scientific name for that "achitis" so breezily described by the doctor: a rupture.

We have debated mentioning this incident at all. Of course at the time we were furious, and remarked that we had seen veterinaries take more pains with an animal—possibly because the owner would pay well. Jeff said, "It isn't quite fair to judge him by this. And after all, he's a very decent person." We knew the doctor to be very pleasant socially, and were about to forget the whole matter.

Then day before yesterday, as if to give us a final example before we leave, Martin appeared at breakfast with his left jaw horribly swollen. It looked like an abscessed tooth. That morning he rode down on his bicycle the seven miles to Scarborough, and then labored up another mile in the hot sun to the hospital. He was in search of the chemist, who is the only approach to a dentist resident here; the regular man comes over to Tobago only three times a year. The chemist (that is, druggist) could not take out the tooth because he didn't have the instruments, so Martin had his sixteen-mile ride for nothing.

Then yesterday morning, his tooth aching so badly he couldn't stand it longer, he decided to go into the health office to the doctor of the southern district; the one who diagnosed the "achitis" is of the north. This decision showed unprecedented courage on Martin's part. But we

began to worry when he did not show up all afternoon. Finally at sunset he arrived, so angry and pained that he hardly spoke civilly to us.

The doctor had taken one look at his tooth, and yanked. According to Martin, he yanked and yanked, broke the tooth, and finally pulled most of it out. Martin is a baby, we know, and we have not heard the doctor's version; but Leotha says his predecessor, no dentist either, pulled her teeth expertly—after giving her a shot to deaden the pain. When Martin was told to come back in the afternoon and have the job finished, he said the pain was too much, and asked for half his dollar back so that he could ride home in the bus. He had had nothing but coffee since early in the morning, and he felt weak.

The charge for any service at the health office is one dollar. The doctor was quite right, although Martin didn't see it that way, in refusing to return any of the money. But he need not have answered, when Martin told him the sun was too hot for him to ride back.

"Well, why don't you wait till it cools?"

Martin's eyes flashed when he told the story; he was like a dumb, wounded animal. The pain was still intense, and the gum continued to bleed. But he most resented the doctor's unnecessary quip.

And we, two Americans, feeling sympathetic and more than a little angry again, but having no permanent responsibility to these people or this island, had to win Martin back with all the kindness and help we could give him. Not simply in order that one more black would not have an eternal grudge against the white man, but because we were human beings together. We were doing no more than some of the planters here would have done.

Yet these two incidents are not calumny upon the mem-



Horatio Caterson, sawyer, brings crabs.



Mistress Cupid walks the cocoa.



Dancing the cocoa.

bers of an honored profession, but upon a government that overworks and undersupplies them. And like the planters, these doctors are often and quite humanly and understandably short of patience.

"It's different when you live here all the time. You can't imagine how exasperating these blacks really are," the planters insist.

That is an easily justifiable statement which we have heard in more than one foreign country. It is always voiced by long-suffering residents, who did not originate but merely inherited the tradition of using the natives as a means to their own ends. They are too harassed and too close to consider the matter impersonally. Even we have lived here long enough to see they know whereof they speak, that no visitor or interloper can tell them they're all wrong.

The other day we were talking to a painter up at Speyside. This is his third winter there; he has always lived at the hotel and been relieved of direct command of any blacks. He merely talks to them as they sit for his companion's portraits. Yet his contention was that if he lived here permanently, he would have no trouble with them, his artistic temperament would never be ruffled. Rather incongruously, we found ourselves allied with the British planter against his overenthusiasm.

And in addition, we had felt that vague undercurrent of fear during Carnival days. That fear has dissipated now; we feel perfectly secure despite our isolation—an isolation which would not be safe in Mexico or many another land. A very levelheaded estate owner, whose relations with the blacks are unusually cordial, put it this



way: "We've never had any serious trouble in Tobago. Oh, we know it might happen, and the government armed us last June. But a few guns wouldn't do any good. If they came at us in a mob, they'd forget which of us they used to like. We would be just so many white men. And what could we do against twenty-five thousand blacks? The best we can do is to treat them squarely."

Still another man echoed this: "It all depends on how you deal with them. Some people have more trouble than others—persuading the blacks to work and remain loyal. You must understand their psychology, and literally talk their language."

Not long ago there was one eminent case of how not to handle them. Just after the riots in Trinidad the former Inspector of Police was accused in a radical Negro paper of using prison labor even for his housekeeping. In high dudgeon, with no thought to the consequences, the Inspector sent a police car to arrest the black originator of that story. The Negro took a witness along with him, which was a smart move. For no sooner was he in the Inspector's office than the white man started to beat him up. That action appeared to denote, among other things, an implied admission that there was some truth in the statement, and naturally the Inspector was immediately recalled; they tell us that during the trial it looked as if he might be thrown into jail.

We had heard tales like this before; we are always hearing them. By this time you may be skeptically observing that we must have come, as too many writers have done, with a ready-made set of prejudices that would match in dogmatism those of the planters; that we have looked for trouble. On the contrary. We had supposed we were going to a peaceful isle; our desire had been to retire from

just these problems of labor and class inequality, from the positive hatred which has sprung up in our own country; in order to gain a better perspective on the States. Hadn't we left all this behind?

We had not. We are under the flag of the British Empire.

Everyone knows and even the British admit that the Empire has faced many setbacks and diplomatic defeats in recent years, beginning with Italy's calling her bluff in the Mediterranean at the time of the Ethiopian conquest. Britain is no longer the greatest power, able to stand alone, and accordingly has had to retrench. History seems to be running parallel with past centuries, when Spain began to lose her hold upon her great colonies in the Americas. Under this new pressure she has had to adopt a reconciliatory attitude to the Rome-Berlin axis. As a result, she has virtually destroyed the neutrality agreement which had theoretically surrounded Spain; consequently, also, more than sixty of her ships have been bombed in the shadow of Gibraltar since the outbreak of the civil war. And only the other day in Parliament it was asserted by a new adherent to the Opposition party that this famous rock, gateway to India and protector of England's rights in the Mediterranean, is no longer impervious to all contenders. At least seventy-five long-range guns are trained on it from Spanish Rightist territories. . . . And in China, England has looked to the United States for assistance, and has rather querulously asked our government to limit the size of certain warships. Nostalgically, she looks back to the time of Victoria and those acquisitive prime ministers.

Even more recently, we have read how the British oil holdings have been confiscated in Mexico; a generation

ago, no small country would have dared to withdraw its diplomats from London and declare boldly and serenely that "not even the proud nations always pay all their debts." This loss has been a terrific blow, for Persia accomplished much the same thing several years ago. No wonder oil-bearing Trinidad has grown in importance.

Out here, we are on the fringe of the Empire, but all about us we feel the unrest of the colonies, brought home to us by concrete examples. And as the list of fiascos grows, it assumes an alarming significance. That is where this paradox of democracy comes in.

Shouldering the white man's burden during the last century, England began freeing her slaves, educating the underprivileged races with a paternal and benevolent attitude which befitted the great, liberal democracy, the country which fostered the Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights. But she does not want to face the results of this elevation of the masses of ignorant people, nor to answer their growing demands. This dilemma brought Gandhi into being, and it looks now as if the new constitution in India will meet discouraging resistance. Egypt has troubled her for long now; Palestine is always in the headlines with new riots between Jew and Arab; her dominions grow more independent. There have been troubles in St. Vincent and even more recently and violently in Jamaica and British Guiana. And although the short-lived uprising of a few hundreds of black people in a handful of tropical islands in the Caribbean is insignificant in itself, suddenly in the light of all the rest it becomes an indication, a hint. Perhaps it is a cloud no bigger than a hand, which may be blown away, as the trade winds frequently drive off the thunderheads. But equally often they pile them up into a nasty storm.

A planter succinctly stated a facet of this paradox of democracy as it applies to Tobago. We were driving with him across the hills that lie above Scarborough, and came upon a fine new high school. At the sight of it our friend grew plainly irritated.

"Yes, all these people want to go to school," he observed sarcastically. "And why? To get away from the land—to become white-collar clerks in the little town of Scarborough, or go away to Trinidad."

(A few days later, to bear out this statement, Leotha told us that most of the young men in Mount St. George had gone as a body to the oil fields in Trinidad to look for better-paying jobs.)

"But there isn't room for them. There aren't jobs enough," the planter continued. "They're deserting the land just when we are crying for labor to work our estates. What black wants to cultivate a provision garden or collect cocoa after he has learned a smattering of Latin? Latin! Yes, that's one of the things they teach here at this school. And when these niggers learn a little mathematics, they want to become bookkeepers."

"But education is . . ." We began to cite some platitude.

"Education merely makes them put on airs. Then they're the devil to deal with—worse than any white man. Like the 'high browns.' Immediately they feel their authority, you see."

And there you have it. Without cheap labor, which means ignorant, uneducated blacks, the estate system could not exist. It is not the fault of the planters that the prices of copra and cocoa have been driven down, although when cocoa brought fabulous sums these blacks were paid even less than they have been since the riots.

We followed out the idea of more education to the logical absurdity. As each Negro grows more educated, he wants more. He is no longer content sleeping with a dozen others in a two-room shack, working just enough to keep body and soul together. It is true, which the planter did not state, that agricultural courses also figure in this school curriculum, and the Inquiry report stresses the necessity for more of them. But when every black man, someday, has been given enough education to become aware of history and the meaning of democracy, it will no longer be the academic question of whether he should work for a shilling or even a pound; or whether he should have his own land; whether he is inherently and unchangeably lazy, shiftless and good-for-nothing in every respect; whether his emotions carry him away and reason will always be foreign to his temperament. What will then matter is that the blacks outnumber their white masters overwhelmingly. And when—we no longer say, if—war comes, the enemy will be sure to attempt the seizure of Trinidad, to cut off the main source of Empire-controlled oil. And why should not this black bulk of the population swing to the other side and aid the conquerors, innocently believing their lot will be bettered?

But that is the future; it may even be fantastic. Any planter might well laugh at our prediction. What he cannot so easily laugh off is a far more insidious maneuver, which has been going on since the first naked African was sold into the blue Caribbean.

It is pervasive, yet unconscious; there is no concerted effort and hardly any shrewdness. It was begun as a defense and has mounted to a role not unlike Gandhi's policy of passive disobedience. It is an attack from the rear.

There is no more amusing case than one in which the black man clearly won, for all his punishment. And it is especially appropriate because it met success through an appeal to the greed of the white. . . .

The black man in this instance, with the elegant name of Arnott Yeates, is well known about Tobago. One of the first words of warning we received was to beware of him and his preposterous stories. He had been in jail several times for the same confidence game.

But one visitor bit. That he did so—he was not new to this island—is due more to the persuasive Yeates than to the credulity of the plaintiff. For, through no fault of either party, the plot was finally disclosed. The denouement came about all because of a shovel.

When the visitor arrived this winter, Yeates greeted him cheerfully and obsequiously at the dock. He probably winked and referred to last year's conversations. At that time, he had told the other that he knew of a fabulous buried treasure in Trinidad. But he needed help. His story was extremely well thought out: there were one hundred and thirty-nine thousand American gold coins, dated 1803, together with a good deal of jewelry—he had every fact at his finger tips. If the boss would help him, he could make them both rich. He was a most convincing talker; at his trial later he spurned a barrister and conducted his own defense.

All he needed was thirty dollars to go to Trinidad, so that he could dig up the treasure and transport it to Tobago. The visitor, probably amused, and tired of being pestered, gave him five dollars. This noble gesture convinced Yeates he had the right prospect. But before you laugh, reflect how enticing it is to get something for nothing, and that these islands are very close to the

Spanish Main, where pirates are known to have buried their loot. And five dollars was little enough for the possible fun.

A few days later Yeates was accosted by his new partner. Yes, he had brought the treasure to Tobago. But because of his fear of the police—buried treasure belongs to the Crown—he had hidden it again in the ground near his house, up Moriah way. Moriah is due north of Scarborough on an uphill road. It is a long walk.

“Just give me five dollars, boss, to pay the lorry charges for carting it up there,” Yeates petitioned. He did not talk with the mumbling dialect of the untutored.

The partner, now skeptical, shook his head. Very well, then, they would go up together and see the evidence. It was late at night, and a taxi was certainly a very comfortable way of getting home for Arnott Yeates. Yet when they arrived at the spot, a lamp burned in a house close by; another night the place might be in darkness, a better time to divulge the treasure trove. Besides, he needed a shovel to dig up the fortune.

So Yeates borrowed a shovel, presumably from the house which his white partner had rented for the winter. As his intentions now seemed honorable, his partner also presented him with a beautiful chromium electric torch, which was capable of burning for a thousand hours.

Soon after, another date was arranged. This time when they met on the spot, a dog was barking. Since the partner had paid for a taxi, he became annoyed. Yeates placated him; all they needed was a nice piece of beef which, properly poisoned, would do away with the dog. The next night Yeates undoubtedly enjoyed a fine steak for supper.

Taxis are expensive, so Yeates suggested—to prove that he did not merely want a lift home—to meet his part-

ner at Moriah. That night the partner waited in vain, and went home cursing. About one in the morning he was wakened out of a sound sleep by Yeates, who had appeared to explain that he could not keep the appointment; but to show his good faith, he had come down to report. Please, would the boss give him seven dollars to pay for the ride down and back?

That was the last donation he received. Shortly afterward, the owner of the shovel, through a relative of his yard-boy who was a constable—or by some such devious and unexpected route—discovered the identity of the notorious Yeates, and he was arrested.

In the courtroom, after the Crown witness had spoken, Yeates presented a different version. Quite to the contrary of the witness who said he had approached his former partner at the dock, he claimed that he had been summoned, and been given a divining rod for finding the location of the treasure, together with a magnet to keep off the evil spirits. At this point in the testimony, the partner squirmed and flushed with exasperation as he looked about the courtroom. Yes, the black man went on calmly, he had indeed received the torch as a gift, but the only money ever given him was for work done. And on one occasion, he stated in an offended tone, the plaintiff had dug a hole on the land of one Duke, took out a jar, placed it in his automobile and drove off without letting Yeates see what was in it. Later he was informed that the jar contained seven hundred twenty-dollar gold coins. And he, Yeates, never saw one of them!

After the jury had deliberated for ten minutes and the judge had given him nine months, he argued with the magistrate. Now, what was the use in making him a hardened criminal? Couldn't he be let off on bond, and



thus be saved the horrors of jail, which would only undermine his character?

"You've had your innings," the judge reminded him.

Indeed he had. But he went off to his cell blithely. You couldn't down that man, nor dampen his spirits. And when he comes out, he'll find another victim. He has shrugged off the white man's authority like discarding an old coat.

## *Buried Treasure*

BUT it was not long before we heard of some real buried treasure.

Debby Currier first told us about it—fitting that we should have listened to the tale at that buccaneers' kind of Tower when we stayed there, so many week ends ago now. Deb herself had succeeded in unearthing a few pieces. "The island is simply full of it, you've no idea," she told us. "And lots of times you'll find it buried beneath the meanest, most rickety old Negro shack."

Mrs. Hamilton, she said, had started her on the search. It was fitting, too, not only that the Robinson Crusoe should house the best collection, but that it should have been acquired by Tobago's oldest surviving family.

The sight we witnessed when we finally went to the hotel was not a cache of old doubloons and jewels. Mrs. Hamilton, unlike Sir Walter Raleigh who spurned the actuality of the pitch lake in Trinidad for a chimerical El Dorado, knows that her treasure is of just as great value. It is a collection of eighteenth century china and fine glass.

Upstairs, in the spacious dining room that overlooks Scarborough harbor, is a regular museum. There were too many pieces to be displayed to advantage. Gleaming china platters lined the walls; dull pewter mugs amid

bright luster and colored figurines; and the glass—glittering, even dazzling as the light struck their facets, goblets and decanters and mugs of Sandwich and Irish and Bohemian pattern. Yet the great names meant little to us then.

"These hurricane lamps," she said, pointing to the great fragile chimneys, nearly three feet high, "are the most astonishing discoveries of all. Look at them—not a crack or a chip. And you know how old they must be. They were quite useful here, especially, to protect candles against the trade winds."

This was a real journey back through time, more intimate than history, more human. That old phrase, "wealthy as a Tobago planter," came to life and made sense.

"But," we asked, not yet comprehending, "after all these years—a century at least. When the planters deserted the island, when the hurricane destroyed—"

"That's exactly it, you see. After the emancipation and the drop in sugar, the people went home to England. They had had all this glass and china sent out to them, of course. You know a great deal of it was made for the West Indies trade. . . . And when they left, I suppose they were too much in a hurry to take anything but their silver. Perhaps they didn't truly appreciate these things as we do; they were modern then and could be replaced easily," she continued, running her hand lovingly over a heavy, squat decanter. She smiled a little. "And perhaps they thought they would return, as Harry's family did, you see."

"But how—? The estate houses went back to the jungle, didn't they?"

"A great deal of what was left behind the blacks stole—

or things were given to them. Mostly the former, I suspect."

That was the most incredible part of all, that the blacks should have bothered saving these pieces, preserving them in such excellent condition. Was this a heretical idea creeping in, to confuse the old tradition of black carelessness?

"Since I've started collecting," Mrs. Hamilton answered for us, "the blacks have begun to learn values. But not very much. They simply call it all 'old ware.' I think they buried a lot of it because they were afraid."

There was an appealing irony. These Negroes had carried on a tradition which had been broken by the fleeing whites, just as they had kept the old names which the *Register* disclosed. And now they were selling the treasures back to the original families.

She confirmed Deb's story that the meanest shack might shelter the greatest prize. "And perhaps that's why the antique dealers haven't bothered about Tobago. The other islands have already been scoured. Sometimes I've visited a whole village before I found a thing. No dealer could devote the time to it. And imagine a stranger trying to understand their *patois*!"

A case in point was the set of decanters she carefully lifted out to let us feel the weight. Their cut stoppers shimmered as we turned them in the light, and they rang with a clear authentic note: it was as if we heard the whole century, and felt the painstaking skill, the integrity of those Irish craftsmen—something which we had lost, of course, to gain other dubious ends. Two of these identical decanters Mrs. Hamilton had found in one cottage, and had congratulated herself upon unearthing a pair; this was unusual good fortune. Then she began tracing down

the old slave families and visiting their descendants; that was the real fun. Wherever she went, she asked after the decanters until all six were found. "I knew there were at least that many," she explained, "because they're the type that was used for shipping brandy out here."

"And these shilling mugs," she said. "My husband especially likes them." They were of pewter, and some of them in bad condition, for they had seen service in the old taprooms. Most of them had yellowed glass bottoms. The story goes that these mugs offered a means of protection for the drinker from the machinations of the recruiting officers of George III, who was having his troubles collecting enough men for his interminable wars. It was their ingenious custom to set up a tavernful of men to as many grogs or ales as it would take to befuddle them. Then the officers would slyly drop a shilling into the mug. As the unsuspecting man responded to "Bottoms up!" his lips touched the coin; he had kissed the head of George, and thus had unwittingly but irrevocably sworn himself into the army. Of course, these glass bottoms prevented the concealment of the shillings. And, too, in those days of short tempers and reply by sword, it was always well to keep an eye on your vis-à-vis.

We decided to join in the hunt for this kind of treasure. Mrs. Hamilton had said only the surface had been skimmed, and very generously insisted that we share her proprietary rights. It was a thoughtful gesture which she could rightfully have begrudged giving; after all, for years she had been the only one to appreciate these things.

Our own foray to Mount St. George met with surprising success. The first two houses we tried yielded nothing,

but a girl at the third took us down the path and after laboring up a steep embankment we came to another thatched-roof hut. A ladderlike flight of stairs ascended to the one room. And despite Mrs. Hamilton's assurances, the old Negress who came to the door looked so poor and ragged that we almost hesitated to ask her. However, out of the darkness beneath the house she dragged an old tin trunk. And from amidst the rubbish of its inherited contents, she produced two plates. One had no hallmark on it, and was probably valueless, but Jeff fell in love with the quaint calico pattern of tiny scarlet and blue flowers scattered over its creamy surface. The other was earthenware, with a border of delft blue flowers on a white ground, and a bouquet in the center. The reverse side bore a registered mark, which looked promising, and the name of T. Godwin, Burslem Stone China. In one of the collectors' books we finally borrowed, we discovered that the Godwins were one of the lesser Staffordshire potters of the late eighteenth century. It was no museum piece, but the old woman wanted practically nothing for the two.

That was enough to imbue us with the collector's fever, although we were still woefully ignorant. Our families had never infected us with their interest in antiques. No, we had always maintained, we wouldn't be burdened with possessions. Besides, in the States, such things cost entirely too much for our budget. But we couldn't resist a bargain at the end of this game of search and seek.

We scarcely ever took a walk after this, or even went for a bathe or picnic, that we didn't look into one or two Negro shacks. It was in one of those huts at Studley Park Crossroads, on the way to our beach, that we found some of our best plunder. The house was no different

from a thousand others; there was the same red hibiscus hedge, the same magenta bougainvillea, the same old cans overflowing with ferns and mountain begonia. And the usual skinny, yapping tan mongrel at the doorstep.

But the neatly dressed Negress who answered our greeting was different. She popped her head out of the one window, her wool bound with a twist of faded yellow and lavender madras, which turned her brown skin to saffron. Evidently she wondered why white folks should come to her door.

"What is your title, sir?" she asked Heath with that frank abruptness which sounds so brash but is only a lack of artificial manners. By "title" she meant, what was our name. We told her.

It was all right then; she knew where we lived, her curiosity was satisfied. She could tell her neighbors who had called. But she didn't think she had anything; she became suddenly deprecating as we were invited to enter.

A row of old ware lined a rough board shelf beneath a stained calendar advertising aspirin. Next a salmon tin that held a little bunch of orange flowers was a graceful figurine.

Jeff could hardly restrain herself. The tiny white china figure was that of a boy in seventeenth century costume. A few touches of gold remained on the base, but the climbing rose vines at his feet were colorless. "Staffordshire," Jeff whispered, although the black woman could not have known the name, "and late eighteenth century, when they were doing all the Shakespearean figures. It looks like *Rosalind*."

Beside the figurine was a miniature white and gold china vase and a trinket box in the shape of a covered table set with dishes and fruit. And there was a strange

little glass boot, apparently a perfume vial that had lost its stopper. On this high boot was strapped a curious six-wheeled roller skate, reminiscent of Godey's Lady's Book. A registered mark had been stamped in the glass side.

"You likes playthings, mistress?" our hostess asked. She did not know whether to be amused or disgusted.

"If you have anything more—" we said.

She would never have taken the initiative if we had not suggested the idea. From under her cot she pulled a box in which were two sparkling old hobnailed mugs. Heath began to take interest. "Just the thing for beer this summer," he said, but Jeff seemed to know they were old and quite good. We hesitated to ask the price.

There was a little bargaining. The "playthings" were of no value to her, but she understood our enthusiasm over the mugs. In the end, we paid her just two dollars and twenty-eight cents for the lot.

Just as we were leaving with our hands full, a young woman, evidently the daughter, came along and reminded her mother of "de big dish." It was certainly big. The oval platter she produced this time bore all the marks of the real thing. Raised flowers scalloped the blue border, and in the center was painted a Swiss scene with chalet and mountains and tiny figures in breeches. The hallmark, which was simply the one word *Genevese* with "Opaque China" below it, meant nothing to us. So restraining ourselves, we offered a ridiculously low price. This time the black woman, coached by her daughter, was adamant at a high figure. Reluctantly, we left without it. But the next day a little boy came bearing the platter to Terry Hill, and we compromised on a price of six shillings, less than a dollar and a half.



Even Mrs. Hamilton was baffled by the mark, and only within the last week have we realized that this is the best of our china. The platter is a piece of English Minton.

It was almost too easy, we began to think. A few weeks later Leotha's family sent word that they thought the constable of Mount St. George—the successor to the obeah man—had a hurricane shade. Heath sighed. The mere prospect of crating and safely carrying back a large curving cylinder of fragile glass was quite disheartening. "But just think," Jeff urged him, "Mrs. Hamilton has eight of them, and that must be nearly all that are left. Can't you just see it at home?"

By the end of the week we had both rationalized the purchase, and decided to go down to visit the constable. But we were too smugly confident.

It was a hot day and we were dripping by the time we had descended all the way to the ocean road. The shack was concealed by high yellow crotons. We picked our way down past the outdoor oven and the general trash of a Negro front yard. A young black girl straightened up from her desultory pruning of rosebushes.

"Good evening." It was after three in the afternoon, and this is the proper salutation. We introduced ourselves and explained our mission.

"Yes'm." But the constable was not home today. "He expectin' you las' week. Hit sure's a beautiful lamp," the girl drawled.

"May we see it?"

"No, sir. Hit belong to de constable, sir."

"And he'll be back—?"

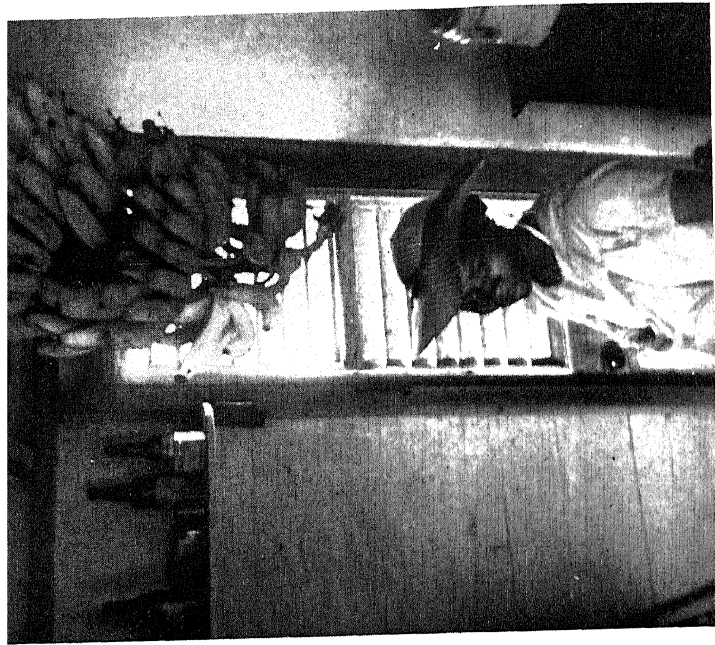
"Not dis day." We looked at each other. Would we



Studley Park Crossroads hides a treasure.



We beat the antique dealers to it.



Leotha cooks in her hut.



Scipio also hunts the tatoo.

have to make this hot trip another time? Then probably they'd want too much for the shade.

"'Sides," the girl added as an afterthought, "hit ain't here no more. De constable, he sold hit to Mistress Hamilton yestiddy."

We were halfway up the hill to our house when Jeff began to chuckle quietly to herself. "I was just thinking," she explained. "You know, that bed we saw through the window." It had taken up nearly the whole interior, a truly royal couch with four handsomely carved posters. "I was just thinking—"

"Now, look here, we're not going to be tied down with *things* any more than we are right this minute. That's an old pact, and we've already broken it enough. How could we possibly take it home and where would we put it? Even if the customs men didn't notice the termites that have probably eaten it through."

"I know. I was just laughing about us, of all people, doing this. Of course, books don't count. But china! From now on, no more."

"That's a resolution."

But, of course, we weakened again. It was Leonora Solomon's fault, because she told us about a handsome decanter and brought it up to tempt us. A good deal had been coming our way lately, and the prices had gone up: the blacks had smelled a new road to riches. If they could sell one or two old things, they wouldn't have to work at Studley Park or Greenhill or Brothersfield for a whole month, or even two. To make matters worse, an English visitor had created a bull market by paying the ridiculous price of nine dollars for two very ordinary luster bowls; he could have got them in London for less.

Leonora, however, assured us that the owner of this

decanter had no such delusions. He might take as little as seven and six—a dollar and eighty cents. Well, there was no resisting when we saw that heavy, scalloped bottle, with three rings round its neck (the usual precaution for the three-bottle man unsteadily grasping his third), and the star on the bottom, which is always a good sign. We touched the stopper to the top and heard that unmistakable, clear ring.

“I hate to say it, but I’m afraid it’s Waterford,” Jeff said under her breath. “Very well, we’ll take it, Leonora,” she added very matter-of-factly.

“An’ jes’ one more object, madam,” Leonora insinuated, producing a small copper luster pitcher with a creamy band, like sandpaper, about its middle. Neither of us cared about this ware, but we thought it would make an amusing gift for some friend who did.

It was because of that pitcher that we later grew so angry with Martin. We had balked at the price, which was more than half what we had paid for our really good decanter. And yet we finally paid the dollar. That wasn’t much, but the blacks had won again with their buried treasure. All except Martin, who wasn’t satisfied. . . .

## *Martin Humbugs Us*

A FEW days after we had bought the luster pitcher, Leonora sent word through Leotha that she would like to speak to madam "privately." At the time, we did not know her reputation for bearing tales, or we might have ignored the whole thing. However, the mischief was done, and we were furious with Martin when Leonora told us. He had advised Mistress Hector, his aunt and the owner of the pitcher, that we had not paid enough for it. The Hector side of Martin's family is a bad lot, but we had not bargained with the old lady, and there was no reason for Martin to cause trouble. We felt that he had displayed a kind of sneaking disloyalty, and told him as much. The blacks had enough of their own innings without Martin's trying to make us out plain robbers. Jeff sent a note to Mistress Hector, saying that she could have the pitcher back if she believed now that the price was unfair.

Leonora had involved us in a maze of Negro complications and side issues. In our innocence we did not realize that Martin and she never had liked each other, and that her tongue wagged at both ends. Martin was disloyal, but she was sly. Our black boy and Leotha, who was growing more bulbous every day, were at outs now, and for some reason Leonora wanted to widen the breach; probably so

that she could gossip. Poor Martin, trapped by the women, was evidently straining at his leash, making the last frantic and instinctive efforts of the cornered male to leap away into his foolish freedom. And Leotha was undoubtedly telling him he must do his duty by her. There was less laughter in the kitchen; Leotha seemed disgusted with her swain.

These were the overtones which began to ring out from that inoffensive luster pitcher. No sooner had we dressed Martin down than Leonora came running again to tell us he had locked the servants' kitchen so that she could not make her tea. We had become involved in a feud; and no other race loves spite or relishes vengeance better than the Negro. This fact was not in the tradition of the laughing darky, so that we might be excused for our incomprehension. At the moment, there was nothing to do but demand that Martin unlock the kitchen, and stare him down for his bald-faced lie that Leonora had never been allowed the use of it when his boss was here.

Even before this our misgivings about Martin had begun. A series of events was finally to make one conclusion quite plain. . . . Oh, there had been small incidents dating from our first month at Terry Hill. As we look back now, the progression seems not only logical but—what do you call it?—geometric in its growing proportions. Like a snowball gathering speed and weight as it rolls downhill.

It all began in a faint and imperceptible way with the renters. Our landlord had forewarned us that Terry Hill was infested with animals which the black people brought up to graze on the savannah. In exchange for this privilege, they were supposed to work one day a month at some

job around the place. We were given the names of a few of the renters. "But their number has probably increased in size since I've been away," our mentor wrote us. "Martin is responsible for their behavior, and I have explicitly told him they must all go packing if ever they bother you."

That should have warned us to expect something. But we were merely outraged when one morning, going down the road, we came upon two sheep placidly nibbling at two of our most beautiful hibiscus hedges. With all the bush in the world, why should they choose our fine flowers!

We shooed them away and mildly reminded Martin that all animals should be tied. But the next morning we were awakened by the sheep baaing impudently beneath our very bedroom window. Somewhere near was also a cow.

This time we became firmer with Martin. "Those sheep *must* be tied," we told him. "Whose are they, anyway?"

"I don' know. . . . Seems like dey jes' pass by," he answered in his vaguest manner.

"Now, Martin! If you don't know, they shouldn't be here. Surely you—"

"You mean *dem* sheep, madam?" He pointed to the only woolly creatures which had ever seen Terry Hill. "I guess dey's—dey's Scipio's, madam."

But Scipio always eluded us, and for awhile Martin tied them up. It was not until much later that we learned they really belonged to our own yard-boy.

These two were obviously in cahoots. Not long ago Scipio, who is always hunting, brought us an animal squirming inside a large gunny sack. We all gathered around to see what they called a "tattoo." Heath remem-



bered an animal by that name, spelled *tatu*, in the Matto Grosso of Brazil; here this same Indian word had cropped up again on our island. But Jeff was quite flabbergasted when a tan little fellow, tied securely with a string by one foot, emerged from the sack: an armadillo, pink shell, pointed nose and ears, and all.

It tried so hard to get away, but the blacks picked it up with their usual lack of feeling and poked their fingers into its fat belly. "Good as pork, madam," they assured Jeff.

She was dubious, and not very interested, but Heath asked Scipio what he wanted for it. One dollar!

Why, beef was cheaper. Scipio denied this; such a nice, fat one, it weighed many pounds. And we would have the shell for a basket.

"Half a crown and no more, Scipio."

"Three shillings, sir."

Martin was taking a great interest, pretending that he wanted to buy it himself.

We called his bluff. "All right, Martin, you buy it then. I'll bet you don't pay Scipio even a shilling."

That was a great joke to them, because they knew it was true. Martin protested that he would keep it and sell the animal for a great price soon. But as the only possible buyers—i.e., ourselves—showed no more interest, one day it disappeared, and finally Martin admitted they had eaten the armadillo.

The other renters seldom approached the house. When we happened upon them as they were drawing water for their animals, they greeted us shyly.

And more hibiscus hedges were being eaten. One day we caught a calf red-handed, but it scampered away. We

came back to the house really angry. "Now look here, Martin. You are responsible. You tell these people to tie up their cattle, understand?"

"I tell 'em, but dey don' do hit."

"It's up to you to see that they do."

"Yes, sir."

Nothing happened. Martin's excuse was they didn't have any rope and couldn't afford to buy any.

We happened to mention this latest trouble to our long-suffering friends at Studley Park. "Why, the thing for you to do is impound them," they said. "Actually, what that means is to take the animals down to the constable, and the owner has to pay to get them out. But you can keep them yourselves and make the people pay. A cow or horse costs five shillings, a calf three, goats and sheep, two. A pig can be killed on sight. It's very simple, and the only way to make them learn."

Two shillings is a lot of money to the blacks, and we hesitated to charge them. But the trouble continued. We began to suspect that Martin had never told the renters anything we said.

One day old Providence, who was more loyal to our cause, captured an errant calf. With some misgivings, Heath tied it just below the badminton court. It was strong and untamed, and had no compunctions about charging him. All that day the poor animal tramped round and round the stump until it had beaten a circle of mud. And all the while it bellowed like a real bull. We set our teeth and tried to work hard and pay no attention. This time we'd show them!

Dusk came, but not the owner of the calf. All night long its roarings continued. In the morning we had

Martin remove our captive to the savannah. Still that trumpeting broke our peace. "Hit misses company," Martin suggested.

But noise means absolutely nothing to these people. The dogs may bark all night when the moon is full, the cuckoo may come and perch in the mango tree and whistle the afternoon through, the cow might bellow all night, and the blacks would not be in the least disturbed.

Plainly, this was a case of endurance. Whether Martin had tipped off the owner to stay away for a few days, or whether that other thought the animal lost, or was merely biding his time, we shall never know. On the third morning we heard no more bellowing, and decided to forget the incident. It was a question who was the more relieved—ourselves, Martin, the owner, or the calf that missed company.

A couple of days later Martin came in wild-eyed. Two calves had trampled his cabbage garden and had eaten three gorgeous heads! This was a real sin.

We were unmoved. "Well, you see, Martin, how we feel when the hibiscus is eaten."

This was different. What was he to do?

"Tie up the animals, of course. Then make the owners pay for them."

It was Providence with his one arm who captured them. And vainly Martin asked us to settle with the owners that evening, which we stonily refused to do. After much conversation, letting us give him a fight talk, he marched out and weakly settled for the price of two heads of cabbage instead of several shillings.

The truth was, Martin was afraid of the renters; in retaliation for tale-bearing, he believed they might put obeah on him or his cattle. And we began to blame our-

selves for placing him in an equivocal position. After all, we would someday be gone, and he had to keep on friendly terms with the renters for many a year. Besides, why shouldn't he band with his own race against us?

Perhaps he blamed us for the fate of his cow. All week we had noticed old Jack, Leotha's grandfather and the village veterinary, hobbling about with a bagful of herbs. But on the very day that a lamb was born and the hen hatched seven chicks, Martin, his great brown eyes looking sadder than ever before, admitted his white zebu cow was "makin' to die." Yesterday old Jack had given up hope and, thus convinced, Martin would do nothing.

We went down with him to the lower pasture, by Scipio's cornfield, to inspect the cow. It lay on its side, its head twisted about in agony, its side incredibly bloated. Martin would not touch his animal, and seemed unmoved by its pain. We suggested that he go for the government veterinary, who we heard was quite efficient. Martin shook his head. "Hit cost too much, and de cow, hit makin' to die."

"Then go down and ask what to do at Studley Park dairy," we told him, and wrote a note to our planter friend, telling him the particulars.

Martin left reluctantly, and came back more resigned than ever. He felt that our friend had insulted him, because he had suggested a farmer's very common remedy of inserting a knife between the cow's ribs so that the gas could escape, and then giving it linseed oil. Martin took this as a poor joke.

And so the white zebu died. Martin went to get some gravediggers, for in the tropics a dead thing must be quickly buried, whether it is human or animal.

Presently up the road, passing under the shade of the

saman tree, marched the procession of gravediggers. First came middle-aged Cupid, bearing only his cutlass. Then Scipio, shovel in hand. Old Jack, representing science, his nearly blind eyes staring but his mouth smiling as if to say he had told us so, brought a spade. Even one-armed Providence carried a pick. Martin, as befit his position of chief mourner, led the group, unburdened by any other implement save his everlasting talk. The task took them all the hot afternoon.

That evening as Martin brought in the rum we noticed his particularly glum expression. This was unlike him, but we naturally supposed he was sorrowful over the loss of his cow. He had finished swizzling the cocktails before he answered our questions about the grave. "De cow, she buried deep." He paused, and we knew there was something more. Suddenly he thrust out his hand at Jeff. "See, madam"—he addressed her because she is always more sympathetic—"jes' here de dog bite me."

There was a repulsive gash on his wrist. A cut on black skin looks more wicked; the blood is a vivid purple against the rich brown. But something was wrong with the wound; it looked as if a mold or growth had already infested it.

"Get me the medicine kit," Jeff told him firmly. Martin knows about the kit, and hates it. But we had visions of rabies, and a little iodine was better than nothing at all.

"Hit's curin', madam." He went on talking against time even after he had obediently brought the kit and Jeff took out the iodine. Then he tried the last desperate resort—truth. "When I goes to fetch Cupid, his'n dog, he bite. Dis a bad day. . . . But look at hit, madam, hit's curin' good—ol' Jack say so." He pointed to the gray-

ish hairs protruding from the wound. "You put 'em in de bite and dey cure—de hairs of de dog what bites you. . . ."

As all these events followed along in rapid succession, it is natural for us to assume they bore some relation to Martin's general deflection and disintegration. It is pure guesswork whether he harbored any grudge against us.

However, through another crazy set of circumstances, Leotha definitely came over to our side, and has been our loyal ally ever since. The very day that the luster pitcher brought to light the Hannibal-Solomon feud, Jeff, still angry with Martin, told Leotha she wouldn't be surprised if he was taking the eggs.

"Martin's been humbuggin' you, madam," Leotha declared, committing one of her own race, and her boy friend to boot, by placing herself on the side of integrity. "Me, I takes it cool. But mother, she says to me, Martin and I is de only people you and Mr. Bowman knows from de village. We should be proper and respectin', she say."

That was the first real clue to the vexing egg problem which began as soon as we had settled at Terry Hill. At Christmas time eggs had gone up in price, for the hens were not laying. It was long after the holidays were over that our Studley Park neighbors told us, "You know, eggs are cheaper now. We can't buy any because all the blacks say Mistress Bowman is still paying two for five." But, they added, our Plymouth Rocks should be producing by now.

We tackled Martin. He looked merely innocent, but Leotha gave him away when she said that the hens were too fat to lay. Martin had been feeding them coconut.

and giving our corn to his pig. After that we watched him feed them in the afternoons. Still, there were no results.

Then our landlord wrote us saying that one of his former yard-boys had trained the hens to lay on his bed. "And that," he said, "accounted for a great shortage. I hope you're not having this trouble with Martin."

We had laughed at our neighbors' suggestion that we had perhaps been buying our own eggs, but with that letter and Leotha's confession we became thoroughly suspicious of Martin. When our landlord sent us two china eggs to encourage the hens, we thought we had triumphed over our black servant.

Although he had never seen such an egg before, Martin held it disapprovingly between his black fingers. "De hens will know," he prophesied gloomily, "when dey pick hit up wid der necks."

Leotha began laughing in his face.

Martin looked indignant. "Dey lay in de bush, anyhow," he asserted.

"Tomorrow," we told him sternly, "we're going to start a new system. You will leave the hen coop closed until noon. Then they'll have to lay there."

But the next morning they were around the house as usual.

"Dey must have *flowed* out," Martin suggested.

Yet we did receive an egg or two from him in the next week. Of course we were paying more for the corn than a dozen eggs would have cost in the village.

Finally, we took matters in our own hands. With hammer and nails and screening we barricaded the hen house and closed and padlocked the door upon our captive chickens. They would stay there until they produced.

Three days passed, and nothing happened. Then we remembered that Mrs. Hamilton had told us that her yard-boy used to roll the eggs out with a long pole. We gave up.

But by that time Martin was up to no more tricks, and Leotha had discovered all the places where the hens laid in the bush.

And Martin Hannibal was groaning on his bed, down with that attack of fever.



## *Rain Comin'*

THE rain was pouring down like a waterfall. As that dreary afternoon wore on, we had abandoned our work and taken up our post on the window seat, huddled in sweaters while we watched the point obscured and the bamboo sway before the onslaught. The green hills were lost behind gray sheets, the gardens were drenched, the badminton court submerged, and our house was dark in the middle of the afternoon. For the sixth time we went out to stand on the wet gallery, with the rain blowing in our faces. Small, persistent rivers were running down our road. A good thing we had paid Scipio to work on the ditches and drains.

In disgust, we went back inside. Since Martin had been sick we had had more than our share of this weather. For two long days we had not been able to set foot outside; and no one could possibly drive up that frictionless slide of a road to see us. Never before had the out of doors seemed so thoroughly desirable, never had we really appreciated our midmorning sun baths or our twilight badminton. And we should be getting on with work.

But we didn't feel like it. In Heath's study, which has shutters but no glass at his arched window, the dungeon-like effect seemed to drive all thoughts from his head. Yet the old compulsion of the city was upon us; the novel was nearly finished, and he wanted to have it retyped in

another two weeks. And Mother and Father Bowman soon were coming to pay us a short visit.

Today was hopeless. We chose books and tried to settle down. Rainy days are supposed to be just the time for catching up on your reading. Yet with the customary perversity of human beings, we found we didn't want to read at all. We wanted to be outside under a blazing sun. As that was impossible, we resorted to the last refuge—with apologies to Napoleon and other fans—solitaire. Not long before on another such day we had in similar desperation manufactured decks of cards out of old scraps of cardboard.

To be perfectly frank, we have had a good deal of rain at Terry Hill—double the normal amount. If there is such a thing as normality in Tobago. Nothing about the luxuriant foliage or even the lives of the inhabitants is indicative of a golden mean. There is always violent sun or violent rain.

Back in January, they told us the rains were over, completely. Our skepticism grew as the months went on, and the old residents became apologetic. As we write this, we find we have had an average of one all-day rain a week. But this year was really exceptional; the newspapers have just published the official figures which prove that twice as much rain fell in the first months of this year. The truth is, any month may see the greatest precipitation, although October through June is the dry season. This year, there had been a drought during the summer months, and we were paying for it.

Usually, it has been not altogether unpleasant. And it is all a part of the old tropic island fable. There is a good literary tradition for those sudden, hard showers. . . .

The morning would often begin brightly, with innocent, billowing trade-wind clouds like great cotton puffballs above our aquamarine sea. Then the ocean would imperceptibly change to silver as a great black cloud rolled down with the wind from the northeast. Patches of the sea, far out, would still be bright, gleaming all the more by contrast with a leaden horizon that was becoming indistinguishable from an overcast sky. Yet it might still pass over. The first indication that it meant business came when the lower edge of the cloud would grow angrily purple and could finally contain itself no longer. Quickly as we watched, moving in closer every second, the downside would be rent into a jagged, dripping fringe like a torn rag. Silver streamers of rain would descend into one recognizable, distinct area in Barbados Bay. Then, we had learned to imitate the blacks by crying the signal to shut doors and windows—"Rain comin'."

On this day, however, we were further plagued and hampered by Martin's fever. The first few days we had inquired after him solicitously, and visited his sickbed, where he lay looking up at us mournfully and saying that he was "some better"—enough, he meant, not to need more of the bad-tasting medicine, but sufficiently ill to be bedridden, unable to work and ready for sympathy and egg-nogs.

Although his main trouble was a rupture, Martin's weakened condition had brought on a fever again, and we doctored him with quinine, the usual tropical medicine. It was not the first time we had had to be physicians, and long before this we had wished for an amateur doctor's book—handy hints for household remedies, that kind of thing. Back in December Martin had come in one day to tell us that Providence had a "fever." Not knowing

then that everything is a fever to the blacks, we had visions of a case of malaria on our hands. Investigation proved that Providence had a very badly infected foot. His calloused hide, which had never seen a shoe, had been pierced by a sharp stick and—well, the dirt did the rest. We waived his advice to buy a piece of raw pork—"jes' de t'ing for hit, massa"—and forced his foot into warm water with plenty of Epsom salts added. Because God had protected and toughened him for seventy-five years, he was up and about, against our instructions, in two days. Martin, however, needed no coaxing to stay abed.

Although Leotha has stood up better than the men, we have dosed her from time to time for colds, with quinine and aspirin; her four aching teeth with oil of cloves; and only the other day Heath put her dislocated arm back in place. We came to Terry Hill quite innocent, having been generally healthy ourselves; we shall go away perhaps not medically wiser, but more resourceful. And next time, we'll take that "handy hints" book with us.

Martin's illness, which continued for two weeks, had necessitated the acquisition of a temporary boy to take the messages to Studley Park. For this position Martin nominated his younger brother, Alfred Hannibal, whom our landlord recalled as having the appearance of an unfledged bird. That quite describes him. He is all gangling legs and arms, a mere scarecrow like so many of the children here, with the usual shy way of ducking his head and laughing, or when he comes to say good night, sidling off before the words are out of his mouth.

Beside Martin he was a mere babe; yet we noticed that he was back from Studley Park in one-third the time. When we suggested a chore, it was done immediately and he was back asking what he should do next. In fact, we

found we could get along very well without Martin. Fate, however, was sitting on the doorstep of Terry Hill that month. Within a week Alfred developed the "swells." This curious disease was chronic; his hands and feet puffed up, and he could neither walk nor carry things. Although he stands erect like any biped, he claims all four members were affected by walking barefoot to Scarborough on the hot "pitch" of the road. So Leotha requisitioned her brother George, who became Martin's second understudy.

George was short and sturdy and more at ease than Alfred. On too many of the days it continued to rain, and after waiting until the afternoon to venture down to Studley Park, George would finally wade through anyway, and come back looking like a small drowned rat. Often, of course, the rain would stop and the warm earth would send up its moisture in a strange tropical fog that filled every green crevice of the hills. But too often the night would bring more, and we would eat our supper to the accompaniment of its deafening sound, feeling the dampness in our clothes and the chill in our very marrows. Our leather shoes had grown moldy, covered with mildew, and the automobile of our neighbor at Studley Park would slide in the mud, coming up to see us, until finally one time it slithered into the ditch, and was stuck for the whole rainy day.

"Dis is nothin', madam," Leotha would cheerfully say. "When de summer rains come, de trees fall and de bridges wash out."

But it was enough for us, and we went to bed with that sound in our ears. Even when we could not see it, we heard those first few drops fall playfully on our galvanize roof overhead in a quiet, tentative patter. Then, without

warning, the center of the cloud would be upon us, and our world collapsed, dissolved and was unreal before the thundering onslaught. It was like the roar of a crushing flood, until our words were drowned by this symphony which plays upon the multiplicity of leaves in the surrounding bush: the broad elephant ears, the fringed arms of banana and the wavy tongues of its wild brother the plantain, the tiny myriads of bamboo, the long wrinkled spears of our countless mangoes, our finger-shaped paw-paws, the delicate feathers of the samans, the hard, shiny leaves of our croton bushes. Each variation played its part in this tropical symphony. And, like any great musical work, there were soft and slow passages, when we would lie tensely waiting that thundering crescendo, the deafening roar again. . . .

But, of course, the skies did clear, momentarily. It was the calm, figuratively and literally, before the storm. Martin was at last on the mend, and his fever had taken some of the devil out of him, so that he watched meekly as Leotha bore the eggs away from the hens. One day of his own accord he painfully walked up to the house and sat in the uncertain sunshine, whitening our shoes. It looked like a gesture of peace and reconciliation, and we accepted it as such. Possibly he felt a trifle guilty because Jeff had fed him so many egnogs. At least, he was a good, well-behaved boy after his sickness.

The time was drawing close for the family's visit. We looked at the sky suspiciously. They would be here for only four or five days while their cruise boat went on to Demerara, and everything must be perfect to live up to the glowing descriptions we had written them. The novel had reached the end of long revisions, and Heath had begun retyping; no matter what the weather, and

despite a cold he was just getting over, this was no time to be temperamental.

And then Jeff caught Heath's cold, and was soon in bed with the flu—in this tropical paradise! We began to moan our fate. But we hadn't seen the worst of it.

One morning when we had a box from Canning's which was too heavy for Martin to bring alone, Davis came up with it. Davis drives the Studley Park dairy van, and ever since the first month had replaced our black Sue as the marketer. Three times a week, Jeff had sent down a list and the money, and had tipped him at the end of the month for his services. His accounting was scrupulous to the penny.

Yet for some reason we didn't like his looks. He was constantly and unbearably officious, and lorded it over Martin and Leotha, trying to start trouble between them and us. For Davis was a high brown, a mulatto, which placed him really in no set category. He was melancholy and submissive and impudent by turn, suffering that fate of all half-breeds. His wife was one of the belles of the village and too much like an upstage Harlem Negress for this West Indian island. Perhaps it was she who drove him so hard; no white will ever know the black man's source for the deep well of his troubles. We did know, however, that he was not popular with the true blacks in Mount St. George.

That morning he stood on the gallery, the rain again adding an accompaniment to those devastating words he was delivering. Pools of water stood about his feet, and water dripped from his felt hat. It was no less than an ultimatum, and Jeff, sensing this, came out shivering in her bathrobe.

He had begun a long-winded story, talking in his low

voice, not looking us in the eyes and speaking so rapidly and persistently we couldn't intervene. It was something about having lost someone else's five dollars. Therefore, his logic went, as he should have to make good—"an' nobody never says I wouldn't pay back what I takes, so I got to make it good"—he could no longer risk carrying our money, for fear he might lose more! The logic was vulnerable, but not Davis' determination. We suspected, and later confirmed our belief, that he was fabricating the whole story. As we listened, unable to get a word in edgewise, we progressed from exasperation to anger to hopelessness.

Whatever his reasons, we knew that we tipped Davis little enough for his work; yet we were paying Studley Park for bringing out our groceries by the van, and he was an employee. Nonetheless, his milk route took much of his time and often he was hurried in Scarborough. Probably he had suddenly decided it was not worth his while.

Even if we didn't blame him, we were in a spot, especially with our family arriving soon. "But if you don't take our messages, Davis, who will?"

He did not look at us. "You can get Sue," he said in an ugly tone.

As tactfully as possible, we reminded him that he had taken the marketing away from Sue, and had borne tales about her dishonesty—evidently to get her small tip.

In effect, he gave us a few days' grace. But the next morning Martin came back to say that there were no newspapers for us. Davis accused Martin of throwing them away. Eventually they were found hidden in the milk van.

Everything looked black indeed. Our Studley Park



friends were leaving for their holiday in England the next day, and we were marooned; we couldn't bother them with our problems, even if this last straw had nearly broken our affection for the island.

Now the blacks had us exactly where they wanted us. The old, unvoiced conclusion became only too apparent: the slaves were indeed the real masters of this island. They had now cut off our food supply.

What were we going to do? Our disillusionment was nearly complete. And when a great lot of magazines arrived from the States, both of us frankly and hungrily devoured the pictures of our own native land with a passionate nostalgia. The photographs of Main Street towns, the homely but secure and efficient evidences of our country, seemed good out of all proportion. In the other foreign places we had been, we had never felt like this before. If our primary desire had been to escape from the States in the first place, this experience would have served us right. Just as we had pictured Tobago from afar as a paradise, we now visualized the States with a new chauvinistic zeal. The balance should have been heavily weighted in favor of Tobago; these troubles established a more equitable distribution of debits and credits.

But there were even more serious considerations. With Jeff sick in bed, Heath was typing madly to get the manuscript finished, racing against time. Aside from planning invalid's meals, and wondering what we would do now that Davis was about to desert us, he was at his typewriter from six in the morning till six at night. If you have ever spent a long day copying, you know exactly how nerve-racking this can be, when your mind is torn between boredom with a too-familiar subject and the realization that this is the last chance to catch mistakes and correct passages. And it was no more pleasant

in Tobago, where the scene at his elbow was merely an aggravation. Not only was he hurrying to be free by the time the family arrived in a few days; but, to be quite frank and crass, the sooner the manuscript was sent off, the sooner it would be considered, the sooner published, if luck held, and the sooner the royalties might start coming in. All of this would take time enough at best.

Meantime, because she was running a temperature and had nothing to do but lie in bed all day and think of these troubles which seemed mountain-high, Jeff had pictured every eventuality. Suppose it continued to rain when the family arrived? Worse than that, Leotha's girth had increased disturbingly in the last few weeks. What if she would be so inconsiderate as to give birth to her child just when we needed her most, and wanted to make the family's visit perfect? Or, at the least, what if she fell into one of her periodical slumps in cooking, which was only too probable? And what, mainly, were we going to do about getting any food at all? Right now, while Jeff was sick, both Leotha and Martin were so solicitous, helping plan the meals and treading on noisy tiptoes. As she brought in Jeff's evening eggnog, for example, Leotha would always ask Heath if she could "undress" his bed for him. But it couldn't last. . . .

The day before Davis stopped bringing our supplies, Leotha came to the rescue. In that moment of desperation when he had delivered his ultimatum, we had told Davis we couldn't live here if he did not continue to help us. Leotha's eyes had widened, and finally she bashfully proposed a plan to us. Her mother had to go to Scarborough three times a week, and she would market for us.

And so everything turned out happily, just like the movies. The skies cleared, too. One morning we awoke to find everything unbelievably fresh and sparkling. The

saman trees, which had been bereft of leaves, had suddenly, almost overnight, dressed themselves in new ones of yellow-green, which held those myriads of red blossom bouquets. The blue flowers of the jacaranda were still full, to add another note to the yellow allamanda and our magenta and scarlet bougainvilleas; and the flamboyant, because of the unseasonable rains, was blooming far ahead of time.

And Mrs. Caterson, Leotha's mother, came up the hill bearing our provisions in a great basket on her head. She had walked the five miles from Mount St. George village to Scarborough market, and had walked back, and on up the steep hill, two miles more. Ready to pay her anything, we asked how much she would charge us.

Mrs. Caterson is dignified and soft-spoken. No matter what her color, she is a lady. Her answer was, "Whatever you want to give me." That is an old ruse employed by some of the blacks, who know they will be paid more than they would dare ask. But Mrs. Caterson meant just what she said. We had been good to her daughter and her little boys; it was her turn to help us out. And in the end it cost us less than the van and was far more satisfactory.

Jeff was getting better, and on Easter night, three days before the family was to arrive, Heath tapped "Finis." And as we write this, it is the first time since that we have bothered recalling what seemed then like an endless interlude.

The blacks had failed us. And although others had come to our rescue, they still remained the real, undisputed masters of the island.

## *Nostalgia*

JUST as it seemed that everything had conspired against us, so, since Easter, with our time growing shorter, life at Terry Hill has become so pleasant again that we cannot bear to think of our imminent departure. In fact, we are now in a quandary as to which is the greatest reality: whether the troublesome days are more characteristic of the tragic history and uncertain future of this little island, or whether our perfect days, with the household machinery running slickly, are nearer the truth—although often they seem no more than moments which we romantically recall.

While our visitors were here, Martin and Leotha did themselves proud. The family have since written us that always they will remember Martin on that first morning, just after dawn, when we drove up with them from Scarborough. He had come running down the steps from the gallery, Leotha behind him, his black face beaming above his white butler's uniform.

That picture contains all the ingratiating qualities he can possess, and epitomizes his abilities as a houseman. We can see him, to the surprise of the family who had been forewarned of our difficulties, serving from the right side, anticipating our wants almost like a city headwaiter, pouring wine as if his life had been spent among banquets.

Long before we were up in the morning, he and Leotha would be at work making dainty sandwiches for our picnics, heating hot water for shaving, laying the table and picking hibiscus blossoms, fresh with dew.

And Leotha! We would have been satisfied if the food had been merely unscorched and simply edible. But that first night she prepared the red snapper on a great platter, its rosy flesh scalloped like a mold, chopped parsley and butter across its broad back, and decorated with slices of green lime, so that the family are still talking about the most delicious fish they have ever eaten. From that moment they began to doubt our warning; they could not believe this sudden change, this contrast which had bowled us over.

True, Jeff had given fight talks all week. And perhaps the contrast was after all not such a paradox, not so inexplicable: the blacks love the theatrical. If they can act, if they can dress up, they will puff and strut like proud pigeons, their vanity childishly evident. The ordinary day's work leaves them cold; it is neither exciting nor novel. But visitors from the United States! We remembered the first few days of our life at Terry Hill, when Martin and Leotha were striving so hard to make a good impression, and when everything we said or did consumed them with curiosity. Now we possessed, by the presence of our guests, a new sort of glamour for them.

We, too, were seeing them with fresh eyes. We laughed again at their solicitous concern with our good night's sleep—which was all lost on the family, who could not understand any of their garbled sentences. We had forgotten our own language difficulties, too. And we were suddenly proud of our gardens, our view, the brass

samovar and the tapa cloth, the handsome furniture which elicited admiration from our visitors.

We recognized anew, also, how fortunate we were to have so much for so little. The family were amazed at how cheaply we could live here. Yet there is none of this fifty-dollars-a-month sort of thing which you too often read about in books. You might, of course, live on this amount if you went completely native; and there are other places in the world where the rate of exchange is that favorable; but the Trinidad dollar is fixed to the pound sterling, and our American money is worth slightly less than at home. Certain things, such as tinned goods and imported articles, are high.

Living in the tropics means three things to most people, we've found: leisure and escape and economy. We have friends in the States who would not agree that we have fulfilled the latter claim. True enough, we have not spent as much as most of the other winter residents; our isolation and our budget has not allowed us to. But we have had a better home than any of them, and for that we have paid only thirty-five dollars a month. For value received, this can hardly be matched; even as we write this, the opportunity may be permanently gone.

We have kept account of what we have spent. And including everything, from camera films to Jeff's dresses, rum and cigarettes and taxis and laundry, we have not spent over a hundred and twenty dollars a month. Of course, to make this a perfectly fair estimate, transportation must be added: about three hundred and fifty dollars, round trip for the two of us, on Captain Hamre's *Ingrid*. This item must be spread over the number of months we shall have been here.

We could have lived for the same cost per month at any

of the three hotels, and enjoyed better food, except that the price would not have included all those extras. We could have lived in the States for that, too, but not as pleasantly or on nearly the same scale. And aside from the cheap luxuriousness of our life here, the spaciousness of our surroundings in this cramped world, we have been away from temptations—from movies and gasoline for our car, from elaborate entertaining and costly liquor, from new clothes and the latest advertised gadgets. But until the family came, we had nearly forgotten. . . .

Furthermore, for the first time since we had set foot on the island, we were now free—Jeff from household duties, for Leotha had taken over, and from her discouraging days on her sickbed; and Heath from the novel, which was a neat pile upon the table. (Even Martin had perused page one thoughtfully, greatly impressed, and asked what the publisher would do with that weighty volume.) We began to see how entirely charming Tobago is to the winter visitor who can loaf away each day. For a time we would lead the life of Riley, which all our northern friends suspected had been our existence from the start.

In very much of a holiday spirit, we accompanied the family back to Port-of-Spain for the few days before they sailed. The last night we ate aboard their ship, and gorged ourselves on celery and olives and ice cream and thick steaks; the stewards were not quite sure what to make of us, and we had to explain that we had not left our island home for many a moon.

When we had originally landed in Port-of-Spain, we had been eager to see only Tobago, and consequently had spent only one hot and hectic day in Trinidad. This was our first opportunity to see the city.

And what a city it is! Only in the Far East can there be a place with quite the same color. The inhabitants apologize for the dirt, but it is immaculate in comparison to Latin countries. Up and down Marine Square, which is not a square but a wide street divided by a lane of grass and trees, all the world passed by. East Indians with turbans and sarongs, the beautiful dark women with their filmy veils and gold nose-rings, walked between Chinese and British and sailors from every port in the Seven Seas. There is a certain indescribable, exotic air about Port-of-Spain which goes well with its romantic name. Streets and suburbs reflect this cosmopolitan tone, and in Canning's we heard French spoken, and many of the shops bore the familiar *Se habla espagnol*. Down Charlotte Street, where we went to look for *alpargatas*, the woven sandals, were little shops, junky and smelly, that did our hearts good. On Frederick Street there were brass trays from India, and ivory figurines, and tortoise shell, and carved camphor chests from Hong Kong; and every store had English printed cloth, over which Jeff lost her mind, and so cheap that she began collecting more work for Mrs. Bruce in Tobago. There was so much to buy! We had forgotten what temptations the city afforded. And because everywhere were bargains, Harry Clark, the famous tailor of whom every West Indies tourist has heard, received his share of our dollars; the English flannels, woolens and doeskins were too good to miss, and we rationalized our purchases by solemnly telling each other that soon we would need good clothes again.

For months we had talked of going to the movies, but the actuality fell short of our expectations; it was British, and poor. We were more amused than impressed with



the section of the audience who wore evening clothes, the men in monkey jackets and stiff collars; for this picture was under the patronage of no less a person than His Excellency the acting Governor.

We did not realize until we were back home what had really impressed us about Port-of-Spain. What had amused Jeff the most was riding around the great savannah in an open trolley; this type is so nearly extinct in the States that she had never ridden in one. But it was not merely the novel means of transportation that delighted both of us; from the tram we could see a wealth of color and smell a score of exotic odors. At this time of year Port-of-Spain is one great bouquet of flowering trees, which gives it the reputation among tropical cities of being second in beauty only to Ceylon.

Here were the real tropics, a part of the fable sprung to life, the mental picture of what a British colony near the equator should be. Not that it was all beauty; the Victorian-baroque houses about the savannah were so hideously gingerbread, so full of stained glass, cupolas, Moorish arches and unrelated turrets, that a good architect would be nauseated at their sight. Yet they fitted in, as did the garish red and blue college. And like the old Queen's Park Hotel, where we stayed, they all seemed to belong to the riot of color and forms which mean the tropics. We mourned the increase of business that was that very week causing the hotel to be torn down and remodeled; its airy verandas, giving onto the savannah, are to be supplanted by a more modern front. A planter's punch would never taste so well in an atmosphere of cement and chromium.

Yet what we had been most taken with was not the manifestations of the city, but the splendor of nature.

There in every yard are the pink or white frangipani. Dozens of flowering vines embrace the trees, and a scarlet bougainvillea or the peach-colored McLean variety may clash with some magenta flower, or a soft violet, or the startling yellow of the cassia. At the hotel we breakfasted on pineapples and orange juice and mangoes, all the fruits that were not yet "in fashion" in Tobago. From our table on the veranda we watched the horses being exercised on the race track in the savannah opposite, and saw duplicates of our saman trees, the full spread of their umbrella-shape more evident than at Terry Hill. The weird cannon ball, a tree with long branches of round red blossoms, caught our attention, and everywhere were the mock apples, the pink-white form of cassia, which covered the tree arms like rhumba jackets. From our room we looked out through palms and a garden with the little marmoset in its cage, and the chartreuse, bright blue and Kelly green love birds, across the savannah to the great cup of high mountains which hem in the city to the north.

We laughed at ourselves for these most vivid memories, as if we had come from some barren land, instead of nearly a replica.

Oh, we know what our friends in Port-of-Spain say: that a town of 75,000 inhabitants is neither large nor small, that it is limited enough to nourish gossip and scandal and petty society, and large enough to be noisy and dirty and hot, and full of the nerve-racking confusion of any city, anywhere. But our impression was quick, and in consequence fresh and enthusiastic: ours was just as true a picture. We told our friends in Port-of-Spain that they did not fully appreciate the rapidity with which they could leave the city and enter the untouched, tropical

wilderness. In a few minutes they could wind up one of the mountain roads and be submerged in the green light of Morne Coco—as remote as we seemingly were at Terry Hill. We have even sat on the gallery of a new house near that fine country club and gazed up one of those green, narrow valleys. . . .

Our stay there was shorter than we would have liked. That morning as we came out of our steamer cabin to see Scarborough again, Henry was on deck to greet us. On the dock, Bismarck came limping up with a package that had come during our absence. And when we went to the Crusoe Hotel for breakfast, Humphrey, too, called us by name.

Yes, home again.

This nostalgia which began then and has been increased by the perfect weather since, by our last picnics, our last visits to the roaring waterfall, and whole days of swimming in our private Barbados Bay, is tinged by the realization that we shall be leaving very soon. Now the cicadas are singing their everlasting whistle in the trees, forewarning that the summer rainy season will be here in dead earnest within the next six weeks. Soon for us no more palms, no more bamboo, no more green hills and sea the color of aquamarines—none of these things, which will remain in our memories the longest. What has the rest—the annoyances and the petty exasperations—amounted to?

For we believe we have acquired a certain new set of values. We have here the things that really count—sun, air, incomparable view, books, and violent color at our doorstep. And *time* for them all. Yet we know that we'll lose all but the fading memory of this when we go,

and memory is not quite enough, after all. Soon we'll be back in the States with our sales resistance lowered, into the routine of cities as you are. And as we were.

It is this sweet peace and this certain reality which has been not all peace, neither romantic nor sentimental but a full and satisfying existence, which we will forfeit. It has been good to get away from the States and from one's own kind, to love it and understand it better. That we have gained, too.

But up there, we'll be wanting this over again. Until the desire gnaws like hunger—have you ever been really hungry?

We are not cured; perhaps we never can be. We've tried to write frankly about this island to exorcize for ourselves as much as for you the too-great spell. We can't do it. It will linger—in the cold gray northern days of uncertain weather, even in the summer. It will come upon us when we drive home from New York over billboard-infested highways, when we stop at hash-houses, with all the modern appliances but none of the amenities. Even as our comforts are provided for, even as we see beautiful things there, too, like the iris and peonies at that time of year, and as we feel the great land instead of this tiny, encompassed island. The memory will lurk behind dark doorways, in damp streets, leer from screaming elevateds, from talk of business doom, which our friends have been reciting in their recent letters. What is it that we've left behind? The palms, the bush, the trades, the black and white over-pattern on this green landscape so splashed with red?

Yet we're escaping from this island. We'll like our own country again, for a few months. Then the world

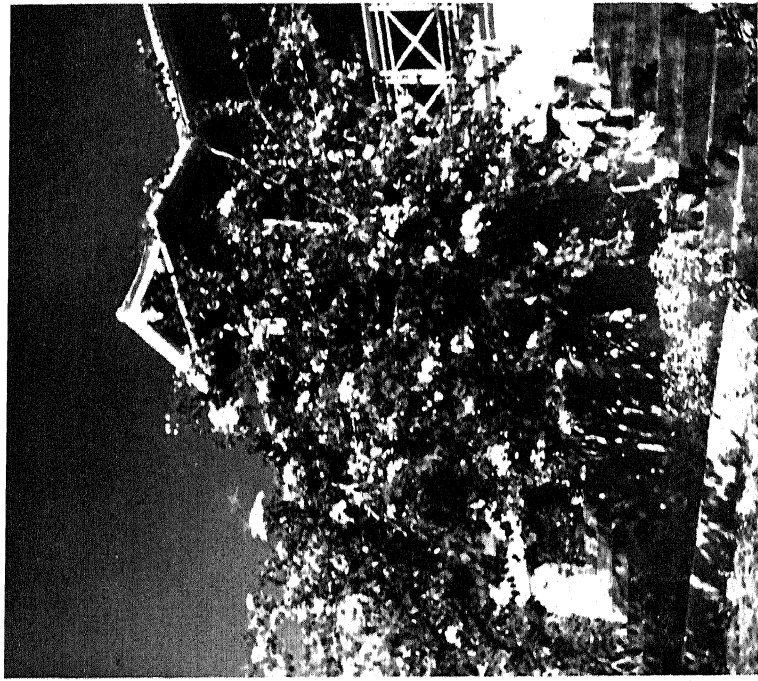
will be too much with us. Perhaps we'll be able only to cherish these memories, perhaps we won't be lucky enough to be off again. Then we'll know what was the value, and we'll have to open these very pages to prove to ourselves that it wasn't all paradise. Because the fable of the tropic island still exists for us.

And why should we, how can we, forecast doom for this island of Tobago? Or even say that it will resort to that sterile thing, a tourists' mecca—preserving the shells of the great estates, the history, as if in a museum?

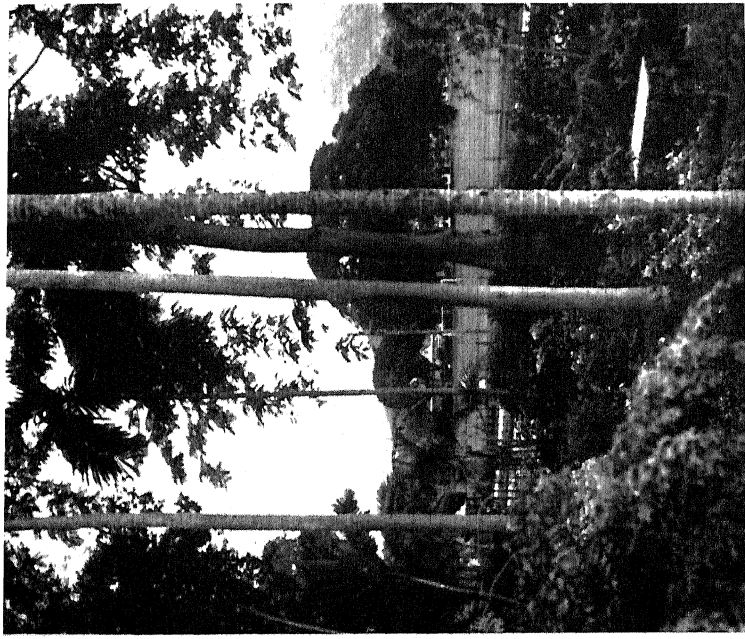
The black will always remain. It is useless to damn them, as the planter does; ridiculous to fear them. We need not even feel sorry for them. They can look out for themselves; they have triumphed already. For they are the true conquerors. . . .

That day when we returned from Port-of-Spain, Martin and Leotha were glad to see us back. Flowers were in the brass bowl, and Leotha wore a new hat, even larger than the old one. They looked more familiar, Leotha once again in her dirty apron, and Martin in his khaki shorts. We noticed it then, and increasingly since, that they have become more friendly, almost openly loving, toward each other. It may not last, Martin may get out of hand again, but Leotha sits happily sewing while he mows the lawn, and Mrs. Caterson treats them both like her own children, thinking of a grandchild, which will certainly arrive any day now.

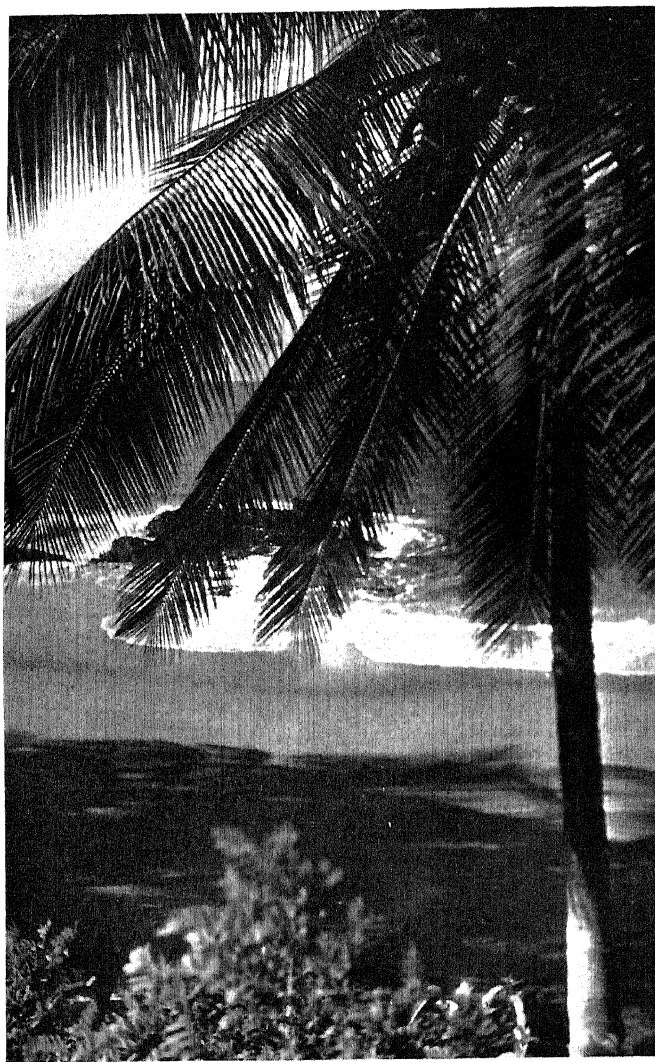
They are not aware yet, these unchanged children of Africa, of their future inheritance. Inevitably as the weeds which take a fallow field, they will slowly and inevitably possess this fertile island. Today they are still children to be looked after. For right away, on that day we returned—late, because we had lingered over break-



Not to forget the bougainvillea at our gallery.



Port-of-Spain is like Ceylon.



At least part of the fable is true.

fast in Scarborough—Leotha had remarked—well, we'll give her the last words in our story:

“We was worried proper. . . . I says to mother, my Gawd, Mistress and Mister Bowman, they ain't comin' back at all, at all. De steamer hit's in now and dey's not come. But mother, she say, dey wouldn't treat Martin and me so rough.”

THE END

















not far from Trinidad, where passengers disembark and where, of old, Sir Walter Raleigh caulked his galleons from a big and ugly lake of pitch. Columbus discovered it on his third voyage and named it for its shape, like a tubical instrument with which the Caribs inhaled the fumes of tobacco—*tabaco*, as the Spaniards spelled it.

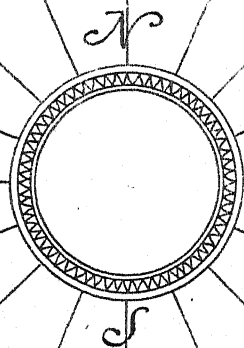
The Spaniards seized it and for a century held it tight. Then for nearly three hundred years the French, the English and the Dutch tried to break that firm Spanish grip. Under the British the island knew its greatest period of luxury when "wealthy as a Tobago planter" became a common phrase. John Paul Jones was tried for murder there. The authors of this book have delved deep into Tobago's contentious, exciting and romantic past.

Tobago in the Atlantic and Juan Fernández in the Pacific contend for the honor of being Crusoe's island. His adventures were largely inspired by those of Alexander Selkirk, cast away on Juan Fernández. But the original title page of *Robinson Crusoe* describes his island as being at "the mouth of the mighty Oroonoka," near Trinidad,—and so Tobago. Man Friday is clearly labeled a Carib. And Defoe did a remarkably convincing job, though there are certainly no penguins on Tobago and when Robinson was "marooned" from 1659 to 1686, there were Dutch and Slavic colonies on the island and many a French and English caller.

Next to Robinson Crusoe, the birds of paradise give Tobago its greatest claim to fame. The Bowmans had the almost incredible good fortune to see the cocks do their famous dance.



# The Island of Tobago



Pigeon Point  
Stor Bay

Buccoo Bay

Mt. Irvine Bay

Plymouth

Courland River  
Sandy River

Scarborough

Castar

Terry Hill

George

Main Tobago Ridge Forest Reserve

Roxborough

Roxborough Bay

King's Bay

Man-o'-War Bay

Charlotteville

St. Giles's Island

Little Tobago

- ① Studley Park
- ② The Tower
- ③ Robinson Crusoe Hotel
- ④ Grafton
- ⑤ Caledonia
- ⑥ Merchiston
- ⑦ Bacolet



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